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Meaning and Normativity of Jerusalem Council's Prohibitions in Relation to  
Textual Variants of Acts 15:20.29 and Acts 21:25. An Analysis and  
Comparison of Early Interpretations (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> Century)

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh

2017

### Declaration

I hereby confirm that the work contained within has been composed by me and that no part of it has been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Signed: Wojciech Paweł Rybka

## Abstract

The thesis collects and analyses the very first (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century) clear quotations, references and interpretations of Acts 15:20.29 and Acts 21:25. It consists of three parts: Part I, which is introductory in nature, presents and comments upon the textual variants of these biblical verses. Part II catalogues and analyses all the relevant texts referring to and commenting on Acts 15:20.29 and Acts 21:25. The purpose is to discover each ancient author's understanding of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions, enumerated in the above verses of Acts. The writers and their texts are divided into three groups depending on which main textual variant of Acts 15:20.29 and Acts 21:25 they referred or quote. Part III presents in its first two chapters a synthesis of the above analyses, juxtaposing and summarizing early authors' views on the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions. Then, the last chapter examines the potential influence of a variant of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 quoted or referred to (or preferred if more variants were known to a given author) by the writers on their understanding of the prohibitions. The thesis shows that despite different textual variants used by the early writers, their interpretations of the prohibitions, although often superficially different, have in a number of cases and on a deeper level more in common than one would preliminarily surmise.

## Lay summary

The Acts of the Apostles, as a part of the New Testament, has been read by millions of readers across the two millennia. Among these readers, the earliest ones (2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century) constitute a particular group who have an advantage of being chronologically, culturally and often also linguistically closer to the author of Acts than the other readers. This thesis presents and analyses the earliest clear quotations and references to three highly significant verses from Acts: 15:20; 15:29 and 21:25. All these verses contain a list of the prohibitions which, according to Acts 15, were imposed by the Jerusalem Council on the converts to Christianity of Gentile provenance. The presentation and analysis of the relevant early Christian texts is meant to reveal the ancient authors' views on the meaning and validity of the prohibitions. Moreover, as the ancient writers quoted or referred to different manuscripts of these verses which presented slightly different lists of the prohibitions, the question of how a given variant of Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25 influenced a given author's understanding of the prohibitions is also examined.

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## Abbreviations

<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>AJEC</i>	<i>Anthropological Journal of European Cultures</i>
ACCS.NT	Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. New Testament
ACT	Ancient Christian Texts
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers. The Works of the Fathers in Translation
AncB	Anchor Bible
ANF	Ante-Nicene Fathers
<i>Anton</i>	<i>Antonianum</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	<i>Apologeticum</i>
<i>ASE</i>	<i>Annali di Storia dell'Esegesi</i>
<i>BHS</i>	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BGBH	Beiträge zur Geschichte der Biblischen Hermeneutik
<i>BibTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of John Rylands Library</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CA	<i>Constitutiones Apostolorum</i>
<i>Can. Pamph.</i>	<i>Canons of Pamphilus</i>



<i>Cat.</i>	<i>Catecheses illuminandorum</i>
<i>Cat. Myst.</i>	<i>Catecheses mystagogicae</i>
<i>CBQ</i>	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
<i>CCG</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Graeca</i>
<i>CCL</i>	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
<i>Clem. Hom.</i>	<i>Clementina. Homiliae</i>
<i>Clem. Rec.</i>	<i>Clementina. Recognitiones</i>
<i>Coll.</i>	<i>Collationes</i>
<i>ColT</i>	<i>Collectanea Theologica</i>
<i>Com. Ez.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Hezechielem</i>
<i>Com. Gal.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Galatam</i>
<i>Com. Matt.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Matthaeum</i>
<i>Com. Rom.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Romanos</i>
<i>Com. Tit.</i>	<i>Commentarii in Titum</i>
<i>CSCO</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</i>
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i>
<i>DA</i>	<i>Didascalia Apostolorum</i>
<i>De cor.</i>	<i>De corona militis</i>
<i>De idol.</i>	<i>De idololatria</i>
<i>De praes. haer.</i>	<i>De praescriptione haereticorum</i>
<i>EBR</i>	<i>Encyclopedia of the Bible and Its Reception</i>

<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Ep. Clem.</i>	<i>Epistula Clementis ad Iacobum</i>
<i>EstB</i>	<i>Estudios Bíblicos</i>
<i>ETL</i>	<i>Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses</i>
FC.NT	The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte
GCS.NF	Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte. Neue Folge
<i>HE</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
HNT	Handbuch zum Neuen Testament
<i>Hom. 1 Cor</i>	<i>Homiliae in epistulam I ad Corinthios</i>
<i>Hom. 1 Tm</i>	<i>Homiliae in epistulam I ad Timotheum</i>
<i>Hom. Acta</i>	<i>Homiliae in Acta Apostolorum</i>
<i>Hom. Gen.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Genesim</i>
<i>Hom. Num.</i>	<i>Homiliae in Numeri</i>
HThK	Herders Theologischer Kommentar
ICC	International Critical Commentary
<i>Inst.</i>	<i>De institutis coenobiorum</i>
<i>Int. 1 Cor.</i>	<i>Interpretationes in Pauli epistulas: Ad Corinthios I</i>

<i>Int. Eph.</i>	<i>Interpretationes in Pauli epistulas: Ad Ephesios</i>
<i>Int. Gal.</i>	<i>Interpretationes in Pauli epistulas: Ad Galatas</i>
<i>Int. Tit.</i>	<i>Interpretationes in Pauli epistulas: Ad Titum</i>
<i>ITQ</i>	<i>Irish Theological Quarterly</i>
<i>JBTC</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
<i>JRH</i>	<i>Journal of Religious History</i>
<i>JSNT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
<i>JSNT.S</i>	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JTS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
<i>JTS.NS</i>	<i>Journal of Theological Studies. New Series</i>
<i>KAL</i>	Kommentare zur Apokryphen Literatur
<i>KEK</i>	Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament
<i>LCL</i>	The Loeb Classical Library
<i>LFHCC</i>	Library of Fathers of the Holy Catholic Church
<i>LNTS</i>	Library of New Testament Studies
<i>LXX</i>	Septuagint
<i>Mar</i>	<i>Marianum. Ephemerides Mariologiae</i>
<i>Mon.</i>	<i>De monogamia</i>

NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaeon Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary of the New Testament
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NPNF	Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers
<i>NTS</i>	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NTTSD	New Testament Tools, Studies and Documents
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
ÖTBK	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
<i>Paed.</i>	<i>Paedagogus</i>
PG	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Graeca
PL	Patrologiae Cursus Completus, Series Latina
<i>Pud.</i>	<i>Pudicitia</i>
Q.	<i>Quaestio</i>
<i>Quaest. Oct.</i>	<i>Quaestiones in Octateuchum</i>
<i>Quir.</i>	<i>Ad Quirinum (Testimoniorum libri tres)</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Revue Biblique</i>
<i>RevSR</i>	<i>Revue des Sciences Religieuses</i>
<i>RHR</i>	<i>Revue de l'Histoire des Religions</i>
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RScR	Recherches des Sciences Religieuses

S.NT	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
SBB	Stuttgarter Biblische Beiträge
SC	Sources Chrétiennes
SCL	Synodi et Collectiones Legum / Synody i Kolekcje Praw
SEÅ	<i>Svensk Exegetisk Årsbok</i>
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SNTU.A	Studien zum Neuen Testament und seiner Umwelt Serie A: Aufsätze
<i>Spec.</i>	<i>De spectaculis</i>
<i>Speculum</i>	<i>Liber qui appellatur Speculum et Liber de Diuinis Scripturis siue Speculum</i>
ST	<i>Studia Theologica</i>
<i>Strom.</i>	<i>Stromate</i>
SUC	Schrifte des Urchristentums
SuppVC	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
TECC	Textos y Estudios «Cardenal Cisneros»
TH	Théologie Historique
<i>TPhil</i>	<i>Theologie und Philosophie</i>
TUGAL	Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Altchristlichen Literatur
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

VT.S	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WSA	Works of Saint Augustine
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
<i>ZThG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Gemeinde</i>

## Introduction

The Apostolic Decree is a highly significant and unique text in the New Testament. Together with the surrounding context of Acts 15, it is one of the earliest texts that depicts a crucial moment in the history of the early Christianity. Its antiquity, as well as the paramount significance of the decisions it describes, make this text impossible to be ignored by any serious scholar interested in the history of the early Christianity even if a given scholar is skeptical about the historical value of Luke's composition in question.<sup>1</sup> The text of the Apostolic Decree contains a groundbreaking decision that the Christians of Gentile origin were not required to observe the Torah in the same way the Jews did. They were obliged, however, to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols, from blood, from strangled animals, and from sexual immorality. As Acts 15:31 relates the meeting, the people in Antioch welcomed the Apostolic Council's decision. Their reaction demonstrated that they understood well the meaning of the decree and, as the Apostolic Council intended, they did not find the prohibitions burdensome. What was, however, not problematic for them, became a problem for the future readers of Acts. The ambiguity of the words used to express the prohibitions as well as differences in textual traditions of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 generated very different explanations of the meaning of these texts. This situation persisted throughout the subsequent centuries, and it can also be seen in the contemporary scholarship. Thus, although many studies have been

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<sup>1</sup> The historicity of the Jerusalem Council as related by Acts and historical reliability of Acts have been questioned by some, e.g., D.E. Smith – J.B. Tyson (eds.), *Acts and Christian Beginnings. The Acts Seminar Report* (Salem, OR 2013) 1-4.173 and maintained by others, e.g., C.S. Keener who adds that the correspondence (although maybe not in every detail) of the Apostolic Council from Acts 15 to the meeting mentioned in Gal 2:1-10 (whose historicity is not questioned) is now the majority view. Consequently, this statement implies that the majority of contemporary New Testament scholars are in favour of the general historicity of Acts 15: C.S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Volume 3: 15:1 – 23:35* (Grand Rapids, MI 2014) 2195-2206. More details on the research of the historicity of Acts can be found in: W. Ward Gasque, *A History of the Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* (Peabody, MA<sup>2</sup> 1989); D. Marguerat, *The First Christian Historian. Writing the 'Acts of the Apostles'* (SNTSMS 121; Cambridge 2004) 2-5; J.B. Green – M.C. McKeever, *Luke-Acts and New Testament Historiography* (Grand Rapids, MI 1994).

undertaken to explain the meaning of these prohibitions and a number of solutions have been proposed, the debate is far from closed.

These texts have already been approached by scholars from many different angles and a variety of methods, both diachronic and synchronic, were employed, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the text. It is undoubtedly important to analyse the process of the text's formation,<sup>2</sup> its historical setting,<sup>3</sup> the sources used by the author or the process of redaction of the literary work.<sup>4</sup> It is also important to examine the final version of the text with the use of a suitable synchronic methodology (such as narrative criticism<sup>5</sup> or rhetorical criticism<sup>6</sup>). Nevertheless, these ways of analysing the text are not exhaustive. It is also valuable to analyse the text from the perspective of its early readers in order to perceive how they appreciate and understand it, or to ascertain how it influences their lives.

The practice of analyzing readers' opinions is by no means a new enterprise: collating literary pieces that comment on or refer to a given text may be as old as a history of writing itself.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, in modern times reader-oriented approaches received a powerful impulse and theoretical

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<sup>2</sup> E.g., T. Boman, "Das textkritische Problem des sogenannten Aposteldekrets", *NovT* 7 (1964-1965) 26-36.

<sup>3</sup> E.g., H. Waitz, „Das Problem des sog. Aposteldekrets und die damit zusammenhängenden literarischen und geschichtlichen Probleme des apostolischen Zeitalters“, *ZKG* 55 (1936) 227-263.

<sup>4</sup> E.g., A.J.M. Wedderburn, "The 'Apostolic Decree'. Tradition and Redaction", *NovT* 35 (1993) 362-389.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., A.J. Bale, *Genre and Narrative Coherence in the Acts of the Apostles* (LNTS; London – New York 2015) 54.

<sup>6</sup> E.g., B. Witherington III, *The Acts of the Apostles. A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI – Carlisle, Cumbria 1998) 439-445.642-651; M.E. Okoronkwo, *The Jerusalem Compromise as a Conflict-Resolution Model. A Rhetoric-Communicative Analysis of Acts 15 in the Light of Modern Linguistics* (Bonn 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, 6.



framework from the philosophy of Hans-Georg Gadamer.<sup>8</sup> The key term he coined, *Wirkungsgeschichte*, has been rendered into English in a variety of ways: the history of effect, history of effects, effective history, history of impact or history of influence.<sup>9</sup> Sometimes the term *Wirkungsgeschichte* is left untranslated due to a lack of consensus how it should be rendered. This term, however, as Robert Evans puts it, “is not a definition of a method but an analysis of a principle that operates universally in every act of understanding and interpretation: alongside the apparent immediacy with which we encounter a text from the past, we need a consciousness that we are already affected by history”.<sup>10</sup> Gadamer’s disciple, Hans Robert Jauß,<sup>11</sup> was one of the proponents of literary theory from which the term *Rezeptionsgeschichte* (reception history) was coined.<sup>12</sup>

It is this expression, reception history, which in the English speaking world became the most widely diffused umbrella term encompassing a plethora of reader-focused approaches to biblical interpretation. According to Jonathan Roberts, co-editor of *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible*, a fundamental distinction to be made is the distinction between the reception of the Bible and the reception history of the Bible. The

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<sup>8</sup> H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen 1960) / *Truth and Method* (transl. J. Weinsheimer – D.G. Marshall) (London – New York<sup>2</sup> 2004).

<sup>9</sup> I. Boxall, “Reception History of the Bible”, J. Riches (ed.), *The New Cambridge History of the Bible. Volume 4: From 1750 to the Present* (Cambridge 2016) 176.

<sup>10</sup> R. Evans, *Reception History, Tradition and Biblical Interpretation. Gadamer and Jauss in Current Practice* (T&T Clark Library of Biblical Studies. Scriptural Traces: Critical Perspectives on the Reception and Influence of the Bible; London – New York 2014) 3. For the detailed description of the principle of *Wirkungsgeschichte* see H.-G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik* (Tübingen 1960) 284-290.

<sup>11</sup> Jauß’s views on questions pertaining to literary studies and hermeneutics can be found e.g., in: H.R. Jauß, *Ästhetische Erfahrung und literarische Hermeneutik* (Berlin 2007) / *Id., Aesthetics Experience and Literary Hermeneutics* (transl. M. Shaw) (Theory & History of Literature 3; Minneapolis, MN 2007); *Id., Towards an Aesthetics of Literary Reception* (transl. T. Bahti) (Theory & History of Literature 2; Minneapolis, MN 1982).

<sup>12</sup> Boxall, “Reception History”, 175.

former “comprises every single act or word of interpretation of [the Bible]”<sup>13</sup> such as sermons of Augustine, numerous paintings of Caravaggio or Handel’s oratorios on biblical themes. It is meant to be comprehensive without excluding anything relevant. The latter, on the other hand, “is usually—although not always—a scholarly enterprise, consisting of selecting and collating shards of that infinite wealth of reception material in accordance with the particular interests of the historian concerned, and giving them a narrative frame.”<sup>14</sup>

One of the main differences among reception-history approaches is their position concerning the importance of a reader with regard to the text. Some reader-oriented methods (such as reader-response criticism) strongly emphasize the importance of a reader or even the reader’s superiority over the text. Other methods do not underline the role of a reader to this extent, but they assume that the influence of the text on a reader helps to understand the text itself in a better way. Still, other approaches might simply focus on the preserved interpretations of readers as an attractive object of research in themselves.

The approach adopted in this study can be characterized as follows: This research is primarily not another direct attempt to discover the original meaning of the prohibitions as intended by those who obliged the Christians of Gentile origin to observe them.<sup>15</sup> Instead, it is focused on a very particular group of readers of the Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 and their interpretations of these verses. This special group consists of early readers of these biblical verses, or, to be precise, of the readers living in the first five centuries of Christianity whose clear references to and interpretations of Acts 15:20.29; 21:25

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<sup>13</sup> J. Roberts, *Introduction*, M. Lieb – E. Mason – J. Roberts – C. Rowland (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of the Reception History of the Bible* (Oxford 2011) 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>15</sup> Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is my belief that the research here presented may also be helpful in trying to solve the issues regarding the original setting and meaning of the Apostolic Council’s prohibitions.

survived.<sup>16</sup> The significance of the writers belonging to this group stems from the fact that they were the first readers of these verses who left their feedback and their feedback survived to this day. Naturally, the first readers and commentators of any literary work do not necessarily constitute a special and privileged group. Nonetheless, in case of the early readers and commentators of the New Testament, some characteristics of theirs have given them an advantage over the modern readers and commentators with regard to the New Testament interpretation. These characteristics can be summarised as the early Christian authors' relative chronological, cultural, linguistic and mental closeness to the times of formation of the New Testament.<sup>17</sup> The above features do not automatically make the early Christian authors better commentators, they constitute them, however, as a special group of readers whose views are certainly worth examining and taking into serious consideration.

Thus, in this dissertation, an attempt has been made to collect and comment on all the relevant early Christian texts containing clear references to Acts 15:20.29 and Acts 21:25 which simultaneously reveal a given early Christian author's understanding of the prohibitions listed in these biblical verses. The research is focused not only on the 2<sup>nd</sup>-and-3<sup>rd</sup>-century interpretations, but also on more numerous references from the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> century. These texts will be presented in the original language they were written (if possible) according to the text from a modern critical edition where available. The presentation of the relevant texts written by early Christian authors aims at discovering these writers' understanding of the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29; 21:25. This is done in

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<sup>16</sup> To be precise, no 1<sup>st</sup>-century sources which would clearly refer to Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25 have been found so, in practice, only texts from 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries are analysed in this dissertation.

<sup>17</sup> This observation does not neglect the differences between the times of the formation of the New Testament and the times between 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries. It only asserts that, in general, the distance and differences between the New Testament writers and early Christian authors were much smaller than between the New Testament writers and modern readers.

order to determine whether the given author's understanding of the prohibitions can be regarded as having been influenced by the textual variant of Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 to which the author referred. In other words, the thesis aims not only at re-examining the early Christian interpretations of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions, but also at discovering whether, or to what extent these interpretations were influenced by the textual variant known by a given author (or in a few cases, preferred by a given author).

Thus, in this work, the reception-history approach is strictly connected with New Testament textual criticism. A few words need to be added here to explain the terminology which is used in this thesis with regard to the different text-types. Traditionally, scholars distinguish four text-types of the New Testament: Alexandrian, Western, Byzantine and Caesarean.<sup>18</sup> The Alexandrian text-type is regarded by the majority of scholars as in general closer to the original texts<sup>19</sup> than the manuscripts from other traditions.<sup>20</sup> As to the Western textual tradition, its origins can be traced even to the second century (in its proto-Western form) although it developed into the form we know contemporarily probably only in the fourth century.<sup>21</sup> The Byzantine tradition is not found in the manuscripts written before the fourth century; therefore, this text type is generally not regarded by contemporary textual

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<sup>18</sup> This does not mean that every book of the New Testament has variants in all these text-types, quite the opposite is actually true.

<sup>19</sup> The term "original text" and the associated issues concerning the very earliest history of the different parts of the New Testament are currently under debate among textual scholars. Some scholars (e.g., H. Strutwolf, "Original Text and Textual History") defend the search for the original text as a valid goal of textual criticism, others try to redefine the traditional objectives, distinguishing between an authorial text, initial text and the archetype (e.g., G. Mink, "Contamination, Coherence, and Coincidence in Textual Transmission"; cf. also D.C. Parker, "Is 'Living Text' Compatible with 'Initial Text'? Editing the Gospel of John"). More information, together with the above articles, can be found in: K. Wachtel – M.W. Holmes (eds.), *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research* (Text-Critical Studies 8; Atlanta, GA 2011). Cf. also a very informative review of this book by S. Charlesworth, *JBTC* 18 (2013) 45-50, <http://rosetta.reltech.org/TC/v18/index.html>.

<sup>20</sup> S.E. Porter – A.W. Pitts, *Fundamentals of New Testament Textual Criticism* (Grand Rapids, MI – Cambridge, UK 2015) 76.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

critics as very reliable for reconstructing the earliest form of the text of the New Testament.<sup>22</sup> Finally, the Caesarean text-type was identified only in 1868 and this identification has recently been questioned: The fact that this purported text-type is represented by few manuscripts of a later date is one of the main arguments against the very existence of this type.<sup>23</sup>

In the present thesis, the text-type division is reduced to only two types which are labelled as Western and Eastern. The rationale behind it lies in the fact that, as it will be shown in Part I of this dissertation, the main textual problem in Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 consists of the presence or absence of *πνικτόν* in one of its morphological forms. This textual feature had a highest potential to influence the ancient interpretations of the Jerusalem Council prohibitions; therefore, the problem of the presence or absence of *πνικτόν* constitutes the crucial element of the current work. Consequently, for the purposes of this thesis, the ancient witnesses are grouped in two categories: the ones containing *πνικτόν* (Eastern) and the ones omitting it (Western). To these two basic categories, the third one is added: authors who knew both Eastern and Western text of Act 15:20.29. The omission of *πνικτόν* is usually accompanied with the presence of some additions (mainly the Golden Rule) which, in general, do not occur in the Eastern manuscripts containing *πνικτόν*. The texts labelled “Western” in this dissertation fully correspond to the above mentioned Western text-type. Although the term “Western” is questioned by a number of scholars,<sup>24</sup> it is, in fact, fitting for the purposes of

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 77-78.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 76-77.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 76. For instance, the term “Western” is questioned by G. Gäbel who states: “It has long been known that ‘Western text’ is a misnomer, and scholars therefore often use circumlocutions such as ‘the so-called ‘Western’ text,’ or something to that effect. Possible alternatives include ‘the D-text’ and ‘the D-cluster’”: G. Gäbel, “The Import of the Versions for the History of the Greek Text: Some Observations from the *ECM* of Acts”, *JBTC* 21 (2016), 4, n.17. Cf. also E.J. Epp, “Textual Clusters: Their Past and Future in New Testament Textual Criticism”, B.D. Ehrman – M.J. Holmes (eds.), *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research. Essays on the Status Quaestionis. Second Edition* (NTTSD 42; Leiden<sup>2</sup> 2013) 519-577.

this thesis: It turns out that among the eight<sup>25</sup> early Christian writers who provided evidence of familiarity with the Western text-type of Acts 15:20, 15:29 or 21:25, seven<sup>26</sup> came from or worked in the Western part of the Roman Empire and six composed their texts in Latin. As regards the term “Eastern”, although it is not used in the wider textual scholarship, it also appears to be appropriate for the purposes of this dissertation: First, it encompasses the “Eastern” textual traditions (Alexandria, Byzantium, and Caesarea which gave their names to the respective text-types were located in the Eastern part of the Roman Empire) and, second, it is an intuitive counterpart of the label “Western”.

The particular approach employed in this thesis has not yet been undertaken in previous scholarship, although some research concerning the early interpretations of the Apostolic Council’s prohibitions has already been conducted. The most significant academic contributions come from German scholarship (by J.G. Sommer<sup>27</sup>, K. Böckenhoff<sup>28</sup>, G. Resch<sup>29</sup> and K. Six<sup>30</sup>).

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<sup>25</sup> Or even nine if Gaudentius of Brescia is taken into account.

<sup>26</sup> Eight with Gaudentius of Brescia.

<sup>27</sup> The contribution of Johann Georg Sommer is the earliest one and consists of two parts: J.G. Sommer, “Das Aposteldekret (Act. XV.). Entstehung, Inhalt und Geschichte seiner Wirksamkeit in der christlichen Kirche 1”, *Theologische Studien und Skizzen aus Ostpreussen* (Königsberg 1887) 175-228; J.G. Sommer, “Das Aposteldekret (Act. XV.). Entstehung, Inhalt und Geschichte seiner Wirksamkeit in der christlichen Kirche 2”, *Theologische Studien und Skizzen aus Ostpreussen* (Königsberg 1889) 141-244.

<sup>28</sup> K. Böckenhoff, *Das apostolische Speisegesetz in den ersten fünf Jahrhunderten. Ein Beitrag zum Verständnis der quasi-levitischen Satzungen in älteren kirchlichen Rechtsquellen* (Paderborn 1903). It should be noted, however, that it was written from the point of view of a canon lawyer who wanted to explain the existence of some Mosaic dietary laws in early Christianity. In 1907, the same author also published the sequel to the contribution mentioned above in which he analyses the texts on the dietary laws from the middle ages: K. Böckenhoff, *Speisesatzungen mosaischer Art in mittelalterlichen Kirchenrechtsquellen des Morgen-und Abendlandes* (Münster 1907).

<sup>29</sup> G. Resch, *Das Aposteldecree nach seiner außerkanonischen Textgestalt untersucht* (TUGAL 28,3; Leipzig 1905).

<sup>30</sup> K. Six, *Das Aposteldekret (Act 15,28.29). Seine Entstehung und Geltung in den ersten vier Jahrhunderten* (Veröffentlichungen des Biblisch-Patristischen Seminars zu Innsbruck 5; Innsbruck 1912).

However, these studies, although still valuable, were written more than 100 years ago and do not necessarily reflect the contemporary knowledge relevant to our topic (this applies especially to the critical editions of the early Christian texts). Among more recent scholarly publications, only a few contributions exist which pertain to this topic. Two of them deserve mention here: One is a postdoctoral dissertation (habilitation thesis) in German by Jürgen Wehnert which was published in 1997.<sup>31</sup> This is the most detailed recent study pertaining to the topic. Nevertheless, it only presents the very earliest references to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions and, more importantly, this presentation is not a central focus of Wehnert's work.<sup>32</sup> The second one is an article (also in German) by Markus Lang from 2011.<sup>33</sup> In distinction from Wehnert's habilitation dissertation, the early interpretations of Acts 15:20.29 constitute the central objective of Lang's article. Nevertheless, his presentation is not extensive and is limited only to the interpretations from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

In addition to the above mentioned goal of this research, there are also other elements that distinguish the current project from the previously published books and articles pertaining to our topic:

- a) This is the first contemporary full-scale investigation of the ancient interpretations of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions in English.<sup>34</sup>
- b) The topic is tackled from a new angle: It focuses on the specific effects on readers<sup>35</sup> of the texts of Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 manifested in their earliest (2<sup>nd</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> J. Wehnert, *Die Reinheit des 'Christlichen Gottesvolkes' aus Juden und Heiden: Studien zum Historischen und Theologischen Hintergrund des Sogenannten Aposteldekrets* (Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments; Göttingen 1997).

<sup>32</sup> Wehnert focuses not on early Christian interpretations, but on the historical and theological background of the Apostolic Decree.

<sup>33</sup> M. Lang, „Die Bestimmungen des Aposteldekretes im zweiten und frühen dritten Jahrhundert“, *Aposteldekret Und Antikes Vereinswesen: Gemeinschaft und ihre Ordnung* (ed. M. Öhler) (WUNT I 280; Tübingen 2011).

<sup>34</sup> There have been some shorter publications in English, e.g., Dennis A. Jowers, "Jerusalem, Council of. II. Christianity. A. Patristics and Early Medieval Times", *EBR* 13 (2016), 1101-1102.

cent. – 5<sup>th</sup> cent.) quotations, clear references, and explanations. Moreover, it explores the relationship of these interpretations to textual variants of Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 which early Christian authors held as original. It does not focus on the influence of the Apostolic Council as a historical event, nor on the ancient understanding of dietary or moral prohibitions if not related to Acts 15:20.29; 21:25.

c) Many previously not easily accessible ancient texts referring to the prohibitions have been assembled and presented in their original language (or in ancient translation if the text in the original language is not extant) as well as in English translation. Some of these texts have not been presented so far in works dealing with early Christian interpretations of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions. Moreover, in many cases, the study makes use of new critical editions of the texts in question, which were not available in the times of Böckenhoff or Six.

As regards methodology and the outline of the thesis, the following points are relevant: The thesis consists of three main parts: In Part I, which has an introductory character, the biblical text is presented outlining its versions and readings. Furthermore, the introductory chapter comments on the main textual issues in these biblical verses. The method used in assessing the readings can be labelled as reasoned eclecticism.<sup>35</sup> This type of textual basis will be helpful in later analysis.

In Part II, the primary assembled data of early Christian texts referring to Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 are examined. These texts from the first five centuries of Christianity have been identified and collected with the use of various resources: This includes the data gathered in previous publications,

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<sup>35</sup> The expression "specific effects on readers" denote early Christian writers' understanding of the meaning and normativity of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions.

<sup>36</sup> For the presentation of this well known and widely used method see Porter – Pitts, *Fundamentals*, 94-95.



as well as search engines of *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*,<sup>37</sup> *Vetus Latina Database*<sup>38</sup> and *BibleWorks*, version 8.<sup>39</sup> The collected texts are presented in the original language<sup>40</sup> in accordance with the best available contemporary critical edition (if a critical edition of a given text exists)<sup>41</sup> as well as with an accompanying English translation. These texts have been divided according to the textual variants of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 they refer to. Then they have been analysed in the process of a close reading and have been compared with other thematically connected or otherwise helpful texts of the same (or a different) author in order to extract the given author's understanding of the meaning and normativity of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions. Although political or historical contexts of the analysed texts are certainly interesting, they have not been discussed in depth in the current work. Such a discussion would inevitably have resulted in the excessive enlargement of the thesis. Moreover, the omission of the in-depth analyses of these contexts enables the work to be focused in greater detail on fathoming the understanding of the early Christian interpretations of Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 and the related textual issues.

Finally, Part III contains a synthesis of the early Christian writers' perception of the particular prohibitions. On the basis of the collected data, it attempts to answer the question concerning the relationship between the textual variants of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, which were referred to and held

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<sup>37</sup> M. Pantelia *et al.* (eds.), *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae. A Digital Library of Greek Literature* (Irvine, CA 2014), <http://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>.

<sup>38</sup> Brepols Publishers (eds.), *Vetus Latina Database* (Turnhout 2017), <http://apps.brepolis.net/BrepolisPortal/default.aspx>.

<sup>39</sup> *BibleWorks. Software for Biblical Exegesis & Research* 8 (Norfolk, VA 2010).

<sup>40</sup> The thesis contains some exceptions from this rule as not all original texts are currently available.

<sup>41</sup> With regard to orthography, the texts are quoted in the form found in the source from which they have been taken. E.g., the Latin text cited from a contemporary critical edition usually slightly differs in its orthography from a text which needs to be quoted from Migne's *Patrologia Latina*.

to be original by a given author and this author's interpretation of the prohibitions.

## Part I

### The Apostolic Council's prohibitions in the Bible

Before we begin to analyse various texts of the early Christian writers with the purpose of discovering their understanding of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions, it seems in place to introduce first the texts of these prohibitions as they occur in the newest critical edition of the New Testament (NA<sup>28</sup>) as well as to present and shortly comment on different variant readings of these texts. The Jerusalem Council's prohibitions appear in the New Testament three times in two pericopes: They occur twice in Acts 15:1-29 and once in Acts 21:17-26.

#### Section I. Prohibitions in Acts 15:19-20: Textual analysis<sup>42</sup>

The first occurrence of the prohibitions can be found in v. 20 of the pericope from Acts 15. For the sake of clarity, this verse needs to be presented with its preceding v.19 as they both belong to the same sentence. According to NA<sup>28</sup>, these two verses read as follows:

διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐπιστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος.

NA<sup>28</sup> does list any variant readings for the v.19. The first variant reading occurs in v.20: in a substantial number of manuscripts, a preposition ἀπό is inserted between τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι and τῶν ἀλισγημάτων. The manuscripts include: papyrus  $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$  (7<sup>th</sup> cent.); majuscules A, C (5<sup>th</sup> cent.); E (8<sup>th</sup> cent.); L (9<sup>th</sup> cent.) and  $\Psi$  (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> cent.); minuscules 33 (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); 1739 (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); 323, 945, 1241, 1505 (12<sup>th</sup> cent.); 614 (13<sup>th</sup> cent.) as well as the Majority text, Vg and some Old Latin translations.

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<sup>42</sup> Information relevant to the textual analysis is taken mainly from NA<sup>28</sup> unless otherwise indicated.

The variant omitting ἀπό is supported by the following witnesses:  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  (3<sup>rd</sup> cent.); majuscules  $\kappa$  B (4<sup>th</sup> cent.); D (5<sup>th</sup> cent.); minuscules 1175 (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); 81 (year 1044); a Latin translation from 6<sup>th</sup> cent. (e) and by the parallel v.29.

The latter reading is preferable on the grounds that it occurs in the oldest manuscripts which represent the best witnesses for both Eastern and Western version of Acts. Moreover, this variant is corroborated by the fact that in the parallel v. 29 ἀπό is also absent, and that D does not have it here although it uses this preposition with the verb ἀπέχεσθαι in its reading of Acts 5:39 (ἀπέχεσθε οὖν ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων τούτων).<sup>43</sup>

The next variant reading is found, according to NA<sup>28</sup>, in  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  where the words καὶ τῆς πορνείας are omitted. This omission is also supported by the Armenian translation, by one of the Ethiopic editions, by the Syriac version of *Didascalia Apostolorum* 24 and by Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8:29-30.<sup>44</sup> Although the papyrus  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$  is the oldest manuscript containing Acts 15:20, its reading cannot be considered preferable mainly for the following reasons:

- a) The number of witnesses supporting inclusion of καὶ τῆς πορνείας is overwhelming.
- b) In  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ , the parallel verses 15:29 and 21:25 are not extant; therefore, it is impossible to compare the verses to determine if the absence of καὶ τῆς πορνείας was a real old tradition or a scribal error.

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<sup>43</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 26.

<sup>44</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 26.

Wehnert thinks that this omission may have been done intentionally in order to exclude from the list of prohibitions the only non-dietary proscription or, alternatively, it may have been a *homoioarkton*.<sup>45</sup>

The next variant reading is of particular importance for the contents of this work. The presence or absence of the word  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is decisive as to whether in this thesis the given text is considered Eastern or Western. On the Eastern side, we have two variants:

a)  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  as in NA<sup>28</sup>; this is supported by  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$   $\kappa$  C E L 323 614, 945, 1175, 1241, 1505, 1739, the Majority text, Vg, some Old Latin and all Syriac translations.

b)  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$ :  $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$  A B  $\Psi$  33 81.

In the Western version, the whole expression  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is absent. Witnesses in favour of this reading include: D, *Gigas Liber* (a Latin codex from 13<sup>th</sup> cent.) and the quotation from the Latin translation of Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.*, which is analysed in the next part of this work.

Among the contemporary scholars, there is a consensus that the versions with  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  are preferable to the Western reading. The reasons in favour of this opinion can be summarized as follows:

a) All the oldest manuscripts (3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> cent.) contain  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$ . Moreover, there is a huge numerical weight of the manuscripts containing  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  over the ones which do not. Therefore, the presence of  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is much better attested than its absence.

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<sup>45</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 26. "Homoioateleuton is an omission caused by two words or phrases that end similarly. Homoioarkton is an omission caused by two phrases that begin similarly": P.D. Wegner, *A Student's Guide to Textual Criticism of the Bible. Its History, Methods and Results* (Downers Grove, IL 2006) 49.

b) The presence of  $\pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is a *lectio difficilior*. It is easier to explain a reason for its omission than a reason for its addition.<sup>46</sup>

As to the Eastern readings, each of them is attested, among others, by one 4<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript and one 5<sup>th</sup>-century manuscript. Some scholars conclude that a reading without an article is original: the variant with an article was to appear as a result of harmonization of the expression with other prohibitions, all of which in v.20 are preceded by an article.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, a variant  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \pi\nu\iota\kappa\tau\omicron\upsilon$  is additionally attested by a 3<sup>rd</sup>-century papyrus and a greater number of other manuscripts, therefore, it is preferable. In Wehnert's opinion, a lack of the article  $\tau\omicron\upsilon$  can be explained by an error of *homoioтелеuton*.<sup>48</sup>

The last set of alternative readings in Acts 15:20 occurs right after the expression  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \alpha\acute{\iota}\mu\alpha\tau\omicron\varsigma$ : the final words of this verse according to NA<sup>28</sup>. This set contains an addition of a Golden Rule in its negative form. This addition appears in the following forms:

a)  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\omicron}\sigma\alpha\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\nu\ \acute{\epsilon}\alpha\upsilon\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota,\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\acute{\iota}\tau\epsilon$ : NA<sup>28</sup> lists only D as a manuscript containing this version and omits as not significant a number of minor witnesses.<sup>49</sup>

b)  $\kappa\alpha\iota\ \acute{\omicron}\sigma\alpha\ \grave{\alpha}\nu\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \theta\acute{\epsilon}\lambda\omega\sigma\iota\nu\ \alpha\acute{\upsilon}\tau\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \gamma\acute{\iota}\nu\epsilon\sigma\theta\alpha\iota,\ \acute{\epsilon}\tau\acute{\epsilon}\rho\omicron\iota\varsigma\ \mu\grave{\eta}\ \pi\omicron\iota\epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu$ : This addition occurs in minuscules 323, 945, 1739, 1891, in Coptic Sahidic, Armenian and

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<sup>46</sup> The details of argumentation in favour of the four prohibitions can be, among others, found in: T. Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament* III (Edinburgh 1909) 18–22; E. Jacquier, *Les Actes des Apôtres* (Études Biblique; Paris 1926) 455–458; M. Simon, "The Apostolic Decree and Its Setting in the Ancient Church", *BJRL* 52 (1969-1970) 437–460.

<sup>47</sup> The supporters of this hypothesis include Westcott and Hort as well as NTG<sup>25</sup>: Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 27.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>49</sup> These witnesses are enumerated in: Resch, *Aposteldecree*, 15-17.

Ethiopic translations as well as it appears as a quotation in the Latin translation of Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.*

Nevertheless, the version without the Golden Rule seems to be original, for the following reasons:

- a) The omission is attested by an overwhelming number of important witnesses:  $\mathfrak{P}^{45}$ ,  $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$ ,  $\mathfrak{N}$ , A, B, C, E, L,  $\Psi$ , 33, 81, 614, 1175, 1241, 1505 and the Majority text.
- b) In the parallel text in Acts 21:25, a clause with the Golden Rule is not attested by any witness. If a clause with the Golden Rule were an original reading, one would expect the witnesses that attest its presence in Acts 15:20 and 15:29, to present it also in 21:25.

## Section II. Prohibitions in Acts 15:28-29: Textual analysis

The second occurrence of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions is located in Acts 15:29. As in the case above, also this verse needs to be presented with its preceding v.28 for the purposes of clarity. According to NA<sup>28</sup>, the text reads:

ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν  
βάρος πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ  
πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε. ἔρρωσθε.

The critical apparatus of NA<sup>28</sup> notes the first variant readings in this passage for the last words of v.28: τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες. This reading, preferred by NA<sup>28</sup>, is attested by  $\mathfrak{P}^{33}$  (6<sup>th</sup> cent.),  $\mathfrak{N}^2$ , B, C, D<sup>1</sup>,  $\Psi$ , the minuscules 81, 614, 945, 1175, 1505, 1739 as well as by a quotation from the Latin translation of Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.*

NA<sup>28</sup> lists four other variants of this phrase:

- a) τῶν ἐπάναγκες: This variant is attested by A 453, 1241, 2818 and Clement of Alexandria.
- b) τῶν ἐξάναγκες: This reading is attested only by  $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$ .
- c) τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων: This reading occurs in E, L, 323 and the Majority text.
- d) τούτων ἐπάναγκες: We find this variant in  $\kappa^*$  D\* and 33.

Among all these variants, the one chosen by NA28 is supported by better and more numerous witnesses, and, therefore, it is preferable.

The next set of variant readings bears a great importance to our research as it is a distinctive marker if the given text is considered Eastern or Western in this dissertation. There are two Eastern variants:

- a) καὶ πνικτῶν: This reading is supported by  $\kappa^*$  A\* B C 81, 614, 1175, all Coptic translations (with some minor differences) as well as references from the writings of Clement of Alexandria and Jerome.
- b) καὶ πνικτοῦ: This is the variant attested by  $\mathfrak{P}^{74}$   $\kappa^2$  A<sup>c</sup> E L  $\Psi$  33, 323, 945, 1241 1505, 1739, the Majority text, Vg and some old Latin translations (with some minor differences), all Syriac translations and a quotation from Cyril of Jerusalem's *Catecheses*.

In the Western version, as in Acts 15:20, the whole phrase is absent. This variant is supported by D, Latin manuscript I (7<sup>th</sup> cent.) as well as references from Irenaeus' *Adv. haer.*, Tertullian's *De pudicitia*, and from the writings of Jerome.

Contemporary scholars prefer Eastern version for the reasons already given in the previous chapter. From the Eastern variants, καὶ πνικτῶν is much better attested: it constitutes the original reading of the oldest manuscripts:  $\kappa$  A B, and, therefore, is rightly preferred.

The next set of variants concerns the addition of the negative form of the Golden Rule. This addition is found in several manuscripts between the words καὶ πορνείας and ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες. We can distinguish the following variants of this addition:



- a) καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι, ἑτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν: This reading is supported by D 1891, Latin manuscripts l (7<sup>th</sup> cent.), p (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), w (14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> cent.), Coptic Sahidic translations as well as references in Irenaeus' *Adv haer*, the writings of Eusebius and in Cyprian's *Testimonia*.
- b) καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γενέσθαι, ἑτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν: In comparison with a quotation mentioned above, γίνεσθαι (infinitive present middle) is replaced by is replaced by γενέσθαι (infinitive aorist middle). This variant appears only in 614.
- c) καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι, ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖν: The word ἑτέρῳ in singular is changed into its plural form ἑτέροις with respect to the version of the Golden Rule from sub-point "a". This variant is supported by 323, 945, 1739 and by a reading from a Syriac Harklean translation which is "enclosed by critical signs".<sup>50</sup>
- d) καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι, ἑτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖτε: The last variant of the Golden Rule features the change of the infinitive ποιεῖν into the imperative ποιεῖτε. This change with respect to the version presented in sub-point "a" occurs in D<sup>2</sup> and 614.

The manuscripts which do not have the Golden Rule addition in v.29 are so many that they have not even been enumerated in the critical apparatus of NA<sup>28</sup>. This overwhelming number of various witnesses, including the earliest manuscripts, allow us to conclude that the variant without the Golden Rule is preferable.

Finally, the last set of variants in v. 29 is found right after the word εὖ:

- a) In the critical apparatus of NA<sup>28</sup> we find the following addition: πράξατε φερόμενοι ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι. This addition is found in D as well as, with some minor changes, in the Latin manuscript l and in Irenaeus' *Adv haer*.

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<sup>50</sup> NA<sup>28</sup>, 72\*.

b) The reading preferred by NA<sup>28</sup> consists of the word πράξετε only. It is supported by all other manuscripts which contain Acts 15:29. Needless to say, this variant, so overwhelmingly attested, is the preferable one.

### Section III. Prohibitions in Acts 21:25: Textual analysis

Jerusalem Councils prohibitions are enumerated for the third time in Acts 21:25. The text (NA<sup>28</sup>) reads as follows:

περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἔθνων ἡμεῖς ἐπεστείλαμεν κρίναντες  
φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ αἷμα καὶ πνικτὸν καὶ πορνείαν.

The first variant reading occurs after the word ἔθνων. In place of ἡμεῖς, D, Latin manuscript gig and Coptic Sahidic translations read οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν λέγειν πρὸς σέ ἡμεῖς γὰρ. All other manuscripts have only ἡμεῖς in this place, and this reading is rightly preferred by NA<sup>28</sup> due to the overwhelming support of various, non-closely related witnesses.

The next set of variants occurs directly after the above one. A variant ἀπεστείλαμεν is supported by uncials B C\* D Ψ, by minuscules 614 and 2495 and by Coptic Bohairic translations. The other witnesses read ἐπεστείλαμεν; this reading is also preferred by NA<sup>28</sup>.

Directly after this set of readings, we find the next large set of variants. The shortest reading consists of the word κρίναντες. This reading is supported by ϣ<sup>74</sup> κ A B 33 1175 and by Vulgate, Peshitta and Coptic translations. Because of the importance of the supporting witnesses, this reading is preferred by NA<sup>28</sup>. The other variants are:

- a) κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰ μὴ: D L 614 1241, Majority text and a Latin translation from 13<sup>th</sup> century (gig).
- b) κρίνοντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰ μὴ: D\*.
- c) κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀλλὰ: 323.

d) κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτο τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς εἰ μὴ: C E Ψ 453 1505.

e) κρίνοντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτο τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀλλὰ: 945.

f) κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτο τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀλλὰ: 1739 1891.

The penultimate set of variants is found where NA<sup>28</sup> reads τό τε. The witnesses supporting this reading are not enumerated in the critical apparatus of NA<sup>28</sup> due to their large number. These are the variant readings of this place with the supporting manuscripts:

a) τό: ϣ<sup>74</sup> D Ψ 614 1505 2818.

b) ἀπό (followed by the prohibitions in genitive, not in accusative as in NA<sup>28</sup>; moreover, the first prohibition is in plural: εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας): E, Vulgate and all Syriac tradition.

Finally, the last variant reading consists of a lack of the words καὶ πνικτόν in D and in a Latin translation from 13<sup>th</sup> century (gig). Needless to say, all the other manuscripts contain these words which is a strong argument in favour of their authenticity.

In conclusion of this part of the thesis, it can be stated that (as it has already been signalled in the Introduction) the presence or absence of the word πνικτόν constitutes the most significant textual problem in all the verses of Acts which contain the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. This textual issue which appears to be crucial for the understanding of the prohibitions is used in Part II as a preliminary criterion for cataloguing the ancient authors and their texts explicitly referring to Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25.

## Part II

### Ancient authors' understanding of the prohibitions in Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25: a survey and analysis

After the presentation of the biblical texts, an effort will be made to determine ancient writers' understanding of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions. The writers have been selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- A) Their writing time took place between 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries.
- B) They quoted or explicitly referred to Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25 in at least one of their writings.
- C) Their writings contain enough material which enables us to know, at least in part, their interpretation of the prohibitions.

These authors are divided into three groups on the basis of the textual variant of Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25 they referred to: a Western text, an Eastern text, or both. In this thesis, a text of Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25 is labelled "Western" if it does not contain the word *πνικτόν* in any grammatical form nor its equivalents in other languages and, conversely, all the texts containing the term *πνικτόν* are labelled "Eastern". In each case, a text containing the reference will be presented in its original language (if extant) according to the critical edition of this text (if available). Then, on the basis of this reference, its context and a writer's accompanying commentary and taking into account other helpful texts thematically connected with the topic in question, an author's understanding of the prohibitions will be explored. Each part of a chapter is concluded with a summary where the salient features of particular writer's views about the prohibitions are summed up.

## Chapter I. Authors referring to the Western text

We can identify six ancient authors in the period under consideration who refer explicitly to the Western (and never to Eastern) text of Acts 15:20 or Acts 15:29. As one would expect, most of them (the only exception is Ephrem the Syrian) came from the Western part of the Roman Empire: one from Gaul, three from North Africa and one from Hispania. Two of them lived and worked in the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> century, one in the 3<sup>rd</sup>, one in the 3<sup>rd</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>, one in the 4<sup>th</sup> century and one in the 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century. We begin our analysis with their oldest representative, Irenaeus of Lyons.

### 1. Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus (ca. 140-202)<sup>51</sup> is most probably the earliest extant author who in his literary work made a clear reference to the texts concerning the prohibitions in Acts 15. In Book 3 of his famous apologetic opus, *Adversus haereses*, he quotes substantial fragments of Acts 15 which also include vv. 20 and 29. The quotation of Acts 15:19-20 in the Latin translation of *Adversus Haereses* reads as follows:

(1)...propterea ego secundum me iudico non molestari eos qui ex gentibus convertuntur ad (2) Deum, sed praecipendum eis ut abstineant a uanitatibus idolorum et a fornicatione et a (3) sanguine; et quaecumque nolunt sibi fieri aliis ne faciant.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> More about Irenaeus' life and work can be found in: P. Foster – S. Parvis (eds.), *Irenaeus: Life, Scripture, Legacy* (Minneapolis, MN 2012).

<sup>52</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 (SC 211.242). Textual notes: (2) The last a is omitted by S (*Salmanticensis* 202, ca. 1456); (3) C (*Claramontanus*, 9th cent.) reads *sanguinem* (accusative) in place of *sanguine* (ablative): Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 (SC 211.8; 211.242). More about textual criticism of a Latin translation of *Adv. haer.* III in: L. Doutreleau, "Chapitre premier. La tradition latine" (SC 210.11-48). Translation: "Therefore, in accordance with my conviction I determine not to trouble those who come from the Gentiles and have converted to God, but command them to abstain from vanities of the idols and from sexual immorality and from blood; and whoever does not want something to be done to himself, he shall not do it to the others" (translation mine). D.J. Unger observes that the Latin translation of the text of Acts 15:13-20 in *Against the Heresies* "differs from the Vulgate inasmuch as

The following is the Greek reconstruction of this text as proposed in by A. Rousseau and L. Doutreleau<sup>53</sup>:

διὸ ἐγὼ κατ' ἐμὲ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐπιστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν θεόν, ἀλλὰ ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ματαιοτήτων<sup>54</sup> τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ τοῦ αἵματος· καὶ ὅσα ἂν μὴ θέλουσιν ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι, ἑτέροις μὴ ποιεῖν<sup>55</sup>.

It is to be noted that the Latin text is very close to the text of Acts 15:19-20 from the *Codex Bezae*.

Next, it is helpful to consider the Latin translation and Greek reconstruction of Acts 15:28-29 in *Adversus haereses*:

(1) *Placuit enim sancto Spiritui et nobis nullum amplius uobis pondus imponere quam haec* (2) *quae sunt necessaria, ut abstinere ab idolothytis et sanguine et fornicatione; et quaecumque* (3) *non uultis fieri uobis alii ne faciatis: a quibus custodientes uos ipsos bene* (4) *agetis, ambulantes in Spiritu sancto.*<sup>56</sup>

ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πορνείας, καὶ ὅσα μὴ θέλετε ἑαυτοῖς γίνεσθαι, ἑτέρῳ μὴ ποιεῖν. ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε πορευόμενοι<sup>57</sup> ἐν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι.<sup>58</sup>

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synonyms are given. This is again the clear indication that Lat. Iren. made his own translation of Scripture from the Greek of Irenaeus” – D.J. Unger, ACW 64.154, n. 55.

<sup>53</sup> More information about this reconstruction can be found in A. Rousseau, “Chapitre V. La traduction française et la rétroversion grecque” (SC 210.144-148). The whole chapter is presented on pages 142-170.

<sup>54</sup> Reconstruction of this word is uncertain, Cf. commentary in SC 210.303. In both *Codex Bezae* and NA<sup>28</sup> critical text ἀλισγημάτων appears in its place.

<sup>55</sup> ποιεῖτε in the *Codex Bezae*. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 (SC 211.243).

<sup>56</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* (SC 211.244-245). Textual notes: (1) *sancto Spiritui* : *spiritui sancto* A (*Arundelianus*, 12<sup>th</sup> cent.); *imponere* : *inpunere* C; (2) *quae* omitted by C; *abstineatis* : *abstineant* S; *idolothytis* : *ydolathitis* A : *ydoloticis* Q (*Vaticanus lat.* 187, ca. 1429); (3) *alii* : *aliis* Editions of Erasmus up to Harvey, Cambridge 1857; *ne* : *non* S; (4) *agetis* V (*Vossianus*, 1494) : *agitis* CAQS Editions of Erasmus; *ambulantes* : *laborantes ambulantes* S: Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 (SC 211.8; 211.244). Translation: “For the Holy Spirit and we decided not to impose on you greater burden than this which is necessary: that you abstain from food offered to idols, from blood, and from sexual immorality; and whatever you do not want to be done to yourselves, do not do to others. Observing these things you will do well walking in the Holy Spirit” (translation mine).

<sup>57</sup> In Acts 15:29 of *Codex Bezae*: πράξατε φερόμενοι.

<sup>58</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 (SC 211.245).

The vv. 28-29 of Acts 15 in the quotation of the reconstructed Greek of Irenaeus are almost identical with the biblical text in the *Codex Bezae*. Irenaeus must have used the manuscripts from the same textual tradition from which three centuries later the *Codex Bezae* would be copied.

The immediate context of these two citations from Acts in *Adv. haer.* does not contain any commentary that would explain how Irenaeus understood the prohibitions. However, this has not prevented some scholars from attempting to infer his intended meaning. For example, G. Resch observes that the presence of the Golden Rule in Irenaeus' version (and also other writers' versions) of the Acts 15:29 as well as the added expression *ambulantes in Spiritu sancto* tell us that the text should be understood as an exhortation to moral behaviour.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Resch suggests that the prohibitions do not concern the dietary laws, but fundamental ethical proscriptions: no idolatry, no murder, no fornication.<sup>60</sup>

Resch's conclusions are not convincing for everyone. K. Six states that the very fact of the absence of *πνικτόν* and the presence of the Golden Rule in Irenaeus' quotation is not enough to conclude that the bishop of Lyon interpreted the prohibitions as ethical commandments with no reference to the dietary laws.<sup>61</sup>

In order to establish Irenaeus' possible interpretation of the prohibitions, it is helpful to examine other passages from *Against the Heresies* which are thematically linked with the prohibitions. The most helpful

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<sup>59</sup> Resch, *Das Aposteldekret*, 41. Actually, Resch offers one more argument in favour of his interpretation: the use of aorist imperative of the verb *πράσσω* (*εὖ πράξατε do what is good*) instead of *εὖ πράξετε* – indicative future active. A command to do what is good would underline the ethical dimension of the prohibitions. This argument might be valid for the text in the *Codex Bezae* where this imperative form occurs, but not for the quotation of Irenaeus – none of the Latin manuscripts records an imperative form of an equivalent of the Greek word *πράσσω* in the aforementioned expression.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. 41-43.

<sup>61</sup> Six, *Aposteldekret*, 9, n.1.

seems to be the text in Book I.6.3<sup>62</sup> in which Irenaeus condemns the practices of notable Valentinians whom he calls, not without irony, οἱ τελειότατοι (the most perfect). This fragment is extant in Greek, and it reads as follows:

Διὸ δὴ καὶ τὰ ἀπειρημένα πάντα ἀδεῶς οἱ τελειότατοι πράττουσιν αὐτῶν, περὶ ὧν αἱ γραφαὶ διαβεβαιοῦνται τοὺς ποιοῦντας αὐτά βασιλείαν Θεοῦ μὴ κληρονομήσειν. Καὶ γὰρ εἰδωλόθута ἀδιαφόρως ἐσθίουσι, μηδὲ [μηδὲν] μολύνεσθαι ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν ἡγούμενοι, καὶ ἐπὶ πᾶσαν ἐορτάσιμον τῶν ἐθνῶν τέρψιν εἰς τιμὴν τῶν εἰδώλων γινομένην πρῶτοι συνίασιν, ὡς μηδὲ τῆς παρὰ Θεῷ καὶ ἀνθρώποις μεμισσημένης τῆς τῶν θηριομάχων καὶ μονομαχίας ἀνδροφόνου θέας ἀπέχεσθαι ἐνίους αὐτῶν. Οἱ δὲ καὶ ταῖς τῆς σαρκὸς ἡδοναῖς καρακόρως δουλεύοντες, τὰ σαρκικὰ τοῖς σαρκικοῖς τὰ πνευματικὰ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς ἀποδίδοσθαι λέγουσιν. Καὶ οἱ μὲν αὐτῶν λάθρα τὰς διδασκομένας ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τὴν διδαχὴν ταύτην γυναῖκας διαφθείρουσιν, ὡς πολλάκις ὑπὲρ ἐνίων αὐτῶν ἐξαπατηθεῖσαι, ἔπειτα ἐπιστρέψασαι γυναῖκες εἰς τὴν Ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, σὺν τῇ λοιπῇ πλάνῃ καὶ τοῦτο ἐξωμολογήσαντο· οἱ δὲ καὶ κατὰ τὸ φανερόν ἀπερυθριάσαντες, ὧν ἂν ἐρασθῶσι γυναικῶν, ταύτας ἀπὸ ἀνδρῶν ἀποσπᾶσαντες, ἰδίας γαμετὰς ἡγήσαντο· ἄλλοι δ' αὖ πάλιν σεμνῶς κατ' ἀρχάς, ὡς μετὰ ἀδελφῶν προσποιούμενοι συνοικεῖν, προϊόντος τοῦ χρόνου ἠλέγχθησαν, ἐγκύμονος τῆς ἀδελφῆς ὑπὸ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ γενηθείσης.<sup>63</sup>

Summarising this passage, we can say that Irenaeus condemns two types of serious moral offences: idolatry and sexual immorality. The evidence of the seriousness of these acts comes from the words of Paul the Apostle in Gal. 5:21 (cf also 1 Cor 6:9): *Those who do these things, will not inherit the Kingdom of God*. The bishop of Lyon explicitly appeals to this biblical

<sup>62</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.6.3 (SC 264.94-97).

<sup>63</sup> Translation: "Because of this doctrine, the most perfect among them shamelessly do all the forbidden things, about which the Scriptures give guarantee *that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*. Food sacrificed to idols they eat without scruple, thinking they in no way defile themselves by it. And they are the first to assemble at every heathen festival held in honor of the idols for the sake of pleasure, with the result that some do not abstain even from the spectacle loathsome to God and men where men fight wild beasts and each other in homicidal fashion. Others give themselves up to carnal pleasures immoderately. Carnal things, they say, must be given to the carnal, and spiritual to the spiritual. Some secretly defile those women who are being taught this doctrine by them. The women who had often been seduced by some of them, but were afterwards converted to the Church of God, confessed that too, along with the rest of their errors. Some, even publicly and without any shame, took away from their husbands whatever woman they loved passionately and took them as their own wives. Others, finally, who in the beginning, feigned to dwell chastely with them as with sisters, were exposed as time went on when the 'sister' became pregnant by the 'brother': Transl. D.J. Unger, ACW 55,37.



passage to refute the notion of the Valentinians who claimed that their spiritual well-being cannot be damaged or destroyed by their actions. It is clear that, according to Irenaeus, eating food offered to idols (the word εἰδωλόθυτα is used in the passage) and participation in the pagan feasts in honour of the idols belong to the ways of practising idolatry. Watching the sanguinary shows performed by the gladiators probably falls into the same category since Irenaeus mentions it in connection with the pagan feasts.

Among the second type of the morally offensive actions that Irenaeus enumerates are the ones resulting from carnal desires, for example, enticing women into sexual relationship, taking women already married as wives and cohabitations of couples falsely claiming to live in chastity.

Before we draw any conclusions regarding Irenaeus' understanding of the prohibitions from this important text, let us examine other passages from *Against the Heresies* that elucidate Irenaeus' view of these issues.

In Book I.24.5, the bishop of Lyon describes the opinion of Basilides who claims that the use of meats offered to idols (*idolothyta*) is a morally indifferent matter. Basilides extends this judgment also to other rites and all kinds of desires.

*Contemnere autem*<sup>64</sup> *et idolothyta et nihil arbitrari, sed sine aliqua trepidatione uti eis, habere autem et reliquarum operationum usum indifferentem et uniuersae libidinis.*<sup>65</sup>

Needless to say, Irenaeus' views on this matter are quite the opposite (see e.g. already quoted I.6.3) although they are not expressed explicitly here.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> In this place, one would expect an additional verb (e.g., *oportere*). It is probable that such a verb was omitted due to a scribal error. Cf. the commentary in SC 263.286.

<sup>65</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.24.5 (SC 264.328,330). Translation: "Now, meats offered to idols should be treated lightly and considered as nothing, but also should be made use of without fear. One may also freely avail himself of other religious rites and freely follow all kinds of desires" (translation mine).

Another relevant text can be found in Book I.26.3. Irenaeus mentions the practices of Nicolaitans condemned by Rev 2:14:

*Nicolaitae autem magistrum quidem habent Nicolaum, unum ex VII qui primi ad diaconium ab apostolis ordinati sunt. Qui indiscrete uiuunt. Plenissime autem per Iohannis Apocalypsin manifestantur qui sint, nullam differentiam esse docentes in moechando, et idolothytum edere. Quapropter dixit et de his sermo: Sed hoc habes quod odisti opera Nicolaitarum, quae et ego odi.*<sup>67</sup>

In this text of Irenaeus, adultery and consumption of food offered to idols are listed as morally wrong practices. It is to be noted, however, that in Rev 2:14, to which the text alludes, fornication is mentioned instead of adultery. For this reason, some scholars amend the Latin text of *Adv. haer.* in this place, substituting the expression denoting adultery with the words ἐν τῷ πορνείῳ.<sup>68</sup>

In Book I of *Adv. haer.* we can find another relevant text that may cast light on Irenaeus' understanding of the prohibitions from Acts 15:29: In chapter 28.2, this time commenting on the practices of the followers of Basilides and Carpocrates, Irenaeus writes:

*Alii autem rursus a Basilide et Carpocrate occasiones accipientes, indifferentes coitus et multas nuptias induxerunt et neglegentiam ipsorum quae sunt idolothyta ad manducandum, non ualde haec curare dicentes Deum. Et quid enim? non est*

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<sup>66</sup> As Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 197 puts it: „Ohne es explicit auszusprechen, macht Irenäus schon durch seine Darstellungsweise deutlich, daß derartige Riten für Christen tabu sind.“

<sup>67</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.26.3 (SC 264.348). Translation: “Nicolaitans have Nicolaus indeed as their teacher. Nicolaus was one of the seven who were ordained as first by the apostles to the diaconate. They live without [care for moral] distinctions. It is fully shown in the Apocalypse of John who they [really] are: They teach that committing adultery and eating food offered to idols do not matter. Therefore the Scripture said about them: But you have this [in your favour]: You hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans which I also hate” (translation mine).

<sup>68</sup> Commentary in SC 263.293.

*numerum dicere eorum qui secundum alterum et alterum modum exciderunt a ueritate.*<sup>69</sup>

Thus Irenaeus provides examples of behaviour through which people *fall away from the truth*. The expression *exciderunt a ueritate* denotes moral wrongfulness and gravity of these actions. The first two of these deeds involve sexual promiscuity (*indifferentes coitus*) and plurality of marriages (*multae nuptiae*) which probably means polygamy. The third action entails carelessness about eating food offered to idols (*neglegentia ipsorum quae sunt idolothyta ad manducandum*).

Finally, in Book II.14.5, the bishop of Lyon, writing once again about the Valentinians, states:

*Ipsam autem edulium et reliquarum operationum indifferentem sententiam, et quod putent a nemine in totum posse coinquinari propter generositatem, licet quodcumque, manducant uel operentur, a Cynicis possederunt, cum sint cum eis eiusdem testamenti.*<sup>70</sup>

As far as the theme of food is concerned, this passage indirectly tells us that, according to Irenaeus, there exists such kind of food that Christians may not eat from the ethical point of view.

Summarizing, the command to abstain from food offered to idols is treated by Irenaeus in an earnest manner. Putting together all the evidence from the passages quoted above, we can conclude what Irenaeus thought of *idolothyta*:

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<sup>69</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.28.2 (SC 264.356). Translation: "Contrariwise, others who got their start from Basilides and Carpocrates introduced promiscuity and plurality of marriages and carelessly ate foods sacrificed to idols. Their excuse is that God is not much concerned about such things. But enough of that! It is impossible to tell the number of those who have fallen away from the Truth in various ways": Transl. D.J. Unger, ACW 55,93.

<sup>70</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* II.14.5 (SC 294.138). Translation: "More yet, their opinion concerning the indifferent quality of foods and other deeds – that they can in no way be defiled by anyone because of their noble lineage, regardless of what they eat or do – they have acquired from the Cynics, since they belong to the same company as these": Transl. D.J. Unger, ACW 65,49.

A) Participating in offering sacrifices to the idols and other pagan rites is morally wrong (I.6.3., I.24.5).

B) By eating *idolothyta*, one defiles oneself spiritually (I.6.3). It seems that Irenaeus equals eating the food offered to idols with an act of idolatry and for this reason, he finds such consumption unacceptable.

C) Not caring what one eats is not morally indifferent (I.28.2). Rather, it appears that the bishop of Lyon is not only against participating in meals in pagan sacred places where the meat offered to idols is consumed, but also against eating such meat bought in the market.

D) Eating *idolothyta* is a serious moral offence. We can reach this conclusion when we take into account the following data:

a) The author of *Adversus haereses* considers such consumption to be included in the list of sins excluding from the Kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21; I.6.3).

b) He also refers to Rev 2:14 where God declares that he hates such deeds as eating *idolothyta* (I.26.3).

c) He criticises an opinion that God does not pay much attention to what one eats (I.28.2).

d) Moreover, he adds that consumption of food offered to idols is one of the ways to fall away from the truth (I.28.2).

Some scholars question whether consideration of the meaning of the sacrifices to idols from other passages of *Against the Heresies* is helpful in discovering Irenaeus' understanding of this prohibition from Acts 15:29.<sup>71</sup> They claim that the dietary practices known to Irenaeus, such as abstaining from meat offered to idols, were not drawn from Acts 15:20.29, but from other sources. For example, Böckenhoff states that these practices were observed

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<sup>71</sup> Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 45-46; Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 198.

independently from the Apostolic Decree and describes them simply as a “Catholic custom in contrast to the excesses of the Gnostics”.<sup>72</sup>

Wehnert is also sceptical about a possible connection between Irenaeus’ statements on sacrifices to idols and his understanding of the Western version of Acts 15:29. He thinks that “the reception of the oral tradition of the Apostolic Decree and the decree’s history of influence within the framework of Acts are two clearly distinguishable processes”.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, Wehnert maintains that, these, as he calls them, purity-law practices (*reinheitsgesetzliche Praxis*) have their origin in the Apostolic Decree, but came to Irenaeus through the oral tradition, and not through the text of Acts.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, this oral tradition must have been distinct from the Western version of Acts known to Irenaeus and Wehnert appears to assume that the Bishop of Lyon was not aware of provenance of both the oral tradition and the tradition recorded in Acts from the common source. Wehnert presents three arguments in favour of his opinion.<sup>75</sup>

A) The use of the Western version of both Acts 15:20 and 15:29 with the addition of the Golden Rule in *Adv. haer.* III.12.14 hints at ethical and not purity-law understanding of the prohibitions by Irenaeus.

B) In *Adv. haer.* III.12.15, we find the following statement: *Hi autem qui circa Iacobum apostoli gentibus libere agere permittebant [...]; ipsi vero [...] perseverabant in pristinis observationibus [...]. Sic apostoli [...] religiose agebant circa dispositionem legis quae est secundum Moysen.*<sup>76</sup> According

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<sup>72</sup> ... *katholische Sitte im Gegensatz zu den Ausschreitungen der Gnostiker*. Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 46.

<sup>73</sup> ... *die Rezeption der mündlichen Überlieferung des AD und seine Wirkungsgeschichte im Rahmen der Apg [sind] zwei deutlich zu unterscheidende Prozesse*: Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 198.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

<sup>76</sup> Translation: “For the ones who were around Jacob the Apostle and who permitted the Gentiles to act in liberty [...], these persons themselves adhered strictly to the older

to this text, the apostles continued to observe the Mosaic Law; to the Gentiles, however, they granted freedom from the Mosaic Law. Consequently, the prohibitions cannot be understood by Irenaeus as purity law, but as fundamental ethical instruction.

C) Irenaeus never refers to the authority of Acts 15:20.29 when he criticises the consumption of meat offered to idols. This fact suggests that the bishop of Lyon did not draw this consumption prohibition from the text of Acts.

Wehnert's first argument is similar to the already presented opinion of Resch and thus shares its weaknesses. The third argument, being an *argumentum ex silentio*, is also, as often happens with this sort of evidence, not very compelling. It is possible to find other reasons why Irenaeus did not directly refer to Acts 15.20.29 while criticising the consumption of *idolothyta*. Perhaps Irenaeus thought that other biblical references which he provided along with the condemnation of *idolothyta* (Ga 5:21; Rev 2:14) were for some reason more useful in his apologetic work. In any event, when the bishop of Lyon was writing about any particular topic, he had no duty to quote all the relevant biblical verses.

As regards the second argument, it is not necessary to see a contradiction between admitting that the apostles did not bind the Gentiles to observe the Mosaic Law and understanding the first prohibition from Acts 15:20.29 not only as abstaining from idolatry in a general way but also as abstaining from eating food sacrificed to idols as a specific manifestation of idolatry. It seems that for Irenaeus the consumption of such food must necessarily mean an involvement in the cult of idols: For example, in Book I.6.3, he condemns eating pagan sacrificial food making a clear allusion to the list of sins in Gal. 5:19-21: the consumption of this type of food is not

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observances [...]. Thus the Apostles acted very carefully as regards the Law according to Moses" (translation mine).

mentioned there, but idolatry is and this term also covers these alimentary practices.

What is more, the same term *idolothyta* which we find in Irenaeus' quotation of Acts 15:29, is used by him in other passages together with the verb "to eat" (I.6.3: εἰδωλόθυστα ἀδιαφόρως ἐσθίουσι; I.26.3: *idolothytum edere*; I.28.2: *et neglegentiam ipsorum quae sunt idolothyta ad manducandum*).<sup>77</sup> This fact strongly suggests that abstaining from *idolothyta* from Acts 15:29 was understood by Irenaeus in a more specific way, namely not only as abstaining from *offering* the sacrifices, but also as abstaining from *eating* them. If we take all the previous texts into account, it is hard to imagine that Irenaeus, having the word εἰδωλόθυστα in the biblical text, did not associate it with eating sacrifices, but only with idolatry and his teaching about abstaining from the consumption of food offered to idols came exclusively from other sources. Therefore, it appears that Irenaeus' wider thought on idol sacrifices is related to his interpretation of Acts 15:20.29.

The problem of Irenaeus' understanding of abstaining from blood is even more complicated. There are almost no thematically linked texts in this regard in other parts of *Adv. haer.* The only text in this apologetic work, which could be helpful, is the already quoted passage from I.6.3. Although the word "blood" is not used in it, it does refer to sanguinary shows, namely θηριομάχα καὶ μονομαχία ἀνδροφόνου<sup>78</sup> (fights with the beasts and men-killing fights of gladiators).<sup>79</sup> These shows, moreover, occur in connection with eating food offered to idols and sexual immorality. Thus, it cannot be excluded that

<sup>77</sup> Of course, we do not always have an original Greek text of Irenaeus. But wherever we find the word *idolothytum* / *idolothyta* in the Latin translation (and wherever are no other textual variants), we can safely assume that in the Greek original text the word εἰδωλόθυστα in an appropriate case and number was used. *Idolothytum* / *idolothyta* were terms phonetically borrowed from Greek exactly for the purpose of rendering Greek εἰδωλόθυστα that had no one-word equivalent in Latin.

<sup>78</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.6.3 (SC 264,96).

<sup>79</sup> Latin translation: *muneris homicidiale spectaculum* (homicidal show of gladiators' fights). This type of free translation is an exception in the Latin version of *Adv. haer.* Cf. P.97, n.2 in SC 263,205.

Irenaeus understood the blood prohibition not in a dietary sense, but as a prohibition of homicide.

On the other hand, Eusebius provides us with the following testimony from Lyon, during the time of Irenaeus' presence in the city (year 177):

καὶ Βιβλίδα δέ, μίαν τῶν ἡρνημένων, ἥδη δοκῶν ὁ διάβολος καταπεπωκέναι, θελήσας δὲ καὶ διὰ βλασφημίας κατακρῖναι, ἤγεν ἐπὶ κόλασιν, ἀναγκάζων εἰπεῖν τὰ ἄθεα περὶ ἡμῶν, ὥς εὐθραυστον ἥδη καὶ ἄνανδρον· ἡ δὲ ἐν τῇ στρεβλώσει ἀνένηπεν καὶ ὥς ἂν εἰπεῖν ἐκ βαθέος ὕπνου ἀνεγρηγόρησεν, ὑπομνησθεῖσα διὰ τῆς προσκαίρου τιμωρίας τὴν αἰώνιον ἐν γεέννῃ κόλασιν, καὶ ἐξ ἐναντίας ἀντεῖπεν τοῖς βλασφήμοις, φήσασα ‘πῶς ἂν παιδιά φάγοιεν οἱ τοιοῦτοι, οἷς μηδὲ ἀλόγων ζώων αἷμα φαγεῖν ἐξόν;’ καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦδε Χριστιανὴν ἑαυτὴν ὡμολόγει καὶ τῷ κλήρῳ τῶν μαρτύρων προσετέθη.<sup>80</sup>

We can see that the practice of not eating animal blood was known and observed among the Christians in Lyons. It is thus certain that Irenaeus knew it as well. Nevertheless, we cannot be certain that this was the way he understood the blood prohibition from Acts 15.20.29. The custom of not eating blood might well have been taken from oral tradition of some kind. It is to be noted that Irenaeus in his apologetic work condemns many serious offences, but never mentions anything about not eating blood. This fact could be interpreted in the following ways:

A) Irenaeus did not consider the custom of not eating blood as a serious moral commandment, similar to not eating food offered to idols. As a consequence, he did not mention it in his apologetic work. Such interpretation would suggest that he understood the blood prohibition in Acts

<sup>80</sup> Eusebius, *HE* V.1.25-26 (GCS.NF 6/1,410.412). Translation: “Now, the Devil, thinking that he had already consumed Bibbas, also, one of those who had denied, and wishing to condemn her by blasphemy likewise, brought her to torture, trying to force her to say impious things about us, as if she were already beaten and weak. But she recovered during the torture, recalling through the temporal punishment the eternal torment of hell, and she contradicted the blasphemers, saying: ‘How would such men eat children, when it is not even permitted them to eat blood even of irrational animals?’ And after this she confessed herself a Christian and was added to the list of martyrs”: Transl. R.J. Deferrari, *FC.NT* 19,278-279.



15:20.29 not as a dietary proscription, but in some other way, possibly as abstaining from shedding human blood.

B) If eating blood was strictly connected to pagan worship practices, then Irenaeus may need not have to mention it explicitly because his readers would understand his condemnation of eating *idolothyta* as a condemnation of eating blood as well. If this were the case, then Irenaeus' dietary understanding of blood prohibition from Acts 15:20.29 would seem more plausible.

As far as Irenaeus' interpretation of abstaining from πορνεία / *fornicatio* is concerned, it can be noted what follows: Although we do not find the words πορνεία / *fornicatio* in the aforementioned passages that elucidate Irenaeus' understanding of *idolothyta*, we, nevertheless, do find condemnations of different immoral sexual practices: enticing women into sexual relationship (I.6.3), taking women already married as wives (I.6.3), cohabitations of couples falsely claiming to live in chastity (I.6.3), committing adultery (I.26.3), sexual promiscuity (I.28.2), polygamy (I.28.2).

Consequently, taking this fact into account and noting the broad range of meaning of πορνεία, we are entitled to make an intelligent guess that Irenaeus understood the third prohibition from Acts 15:29 in the broadest way possible, namely as abstaining from any kind of sexual immorality.

#### Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29 (in the context of the substantial part of Acts 15) with no commentary on the prohibitions.

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4 in every quoted verse.

D) Irenaeus' understanding of the prohibitions:

a) *Abstinere a uanitibus idolorum / abstinere ab idolothytis*: Irenaeus treats eating food offered to idols as a manifestation of idolatry. Thus, as

eating such food would be tantamount to committing an act of idolatry, a Christian is bound to abstain from it.

b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Irenaeus' understanding of this prohibition is not very clear. He could have interpreted it as abstaining from shedding human blood, abstaining from eating blood or perhaps both.

c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Probably abstaining from any kind of sexual immorality.

d) *Quaecumque nolunt sibi fieri aliis ne faciant / quaecumque non uultis fieri uobis alii ne faciatis*: Not doing to others what one would not like to be done to himself.

## 2. Tertullian of Carthage

Having analysed Irenaeus' quotations of the prohibitions, we continue with the writings of Tertullian (ca. 160 – ca. 225), the first writer from Proconsular Africa who quoted Acts 15:29. In his works, there are two instances of an explicit reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. The first one occurs in his treatise *De idololatria* (*On Idolatry*). It was probably written between 203 and 206, although one cannot exclude a greater time range, namely between 198 and 208.<sup>81</sup> It contains exhortations directed to Christians and to those interested in Christianity to live truly Christian lives.<sup>82</sup> Living as true Christians necessarily means shunning all idolatry which is described by Tertullian as *[p]rincipale crimen generis humani* ("the chief crime of mankind") in the very first words of the treatise.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> J.H. Waszink – J.C.M. Van Winden – P.G. Van der Nat, *SuppVC* 1,12. More about the problem of dating *De idol.*: *Ibid.*, 10-13.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>83</sup> Tertullian, *De idol.* 1.1 (*SuppVC* 1,22-23).

This conviction of Tertullian is clearly visible in the part of the work which refers to the Apostolic Council, namely 24.2-3. Here is the Latin text of the reference<sup>84</sup>:

(...) *Nihil esse facilius potest quam cautio idololatriae, si timor eius in capite sit. Quaecumque<sup>85</sup> necessitas minor est periculo<sup>86</sup> tanto comparata<sup>87</sup>. Propterea spiritus sanctus consultantibus tunc apostolis vinculum et iugum nobis relaxavit, ut idololatriae devitandae vacaremus. Haec erit lex nostra, quo<sup>88</sup> expedita hoc plenius administranda, propria Christianorum,<sup>89</sup> per quam ab ethnicis agnoscimur et examinamur; haec accedentibus ad fidem proponenda et ingredientibus in fidem<sup>90</sup> inculcanda est, ut accedentes deliberent, observantes perseverent, non observantes<sup>91</sup> renuntient sibi.<sup>92</sup>*

<sup>84</sup> The text and textual notes are taken from SuppVC 1, 68-70. This text is based on the *Codex Agobardinus*, the oldest available manuscript of Tertullian (SuppVC 1,1.6).

<sup>85</sup> In the B edition (copied by Martinus Mesnartius: see SuppVC 1,3) instead of *in capite sit. Quaecumque* we find: *in capite sunt quaecumque*.

<sup>86</sup> In the edition of Jacobus Pamelius (Antwerp 1579), a comma is put after this word.

<sup>87</sup> In the B edition, correction of Iunius was adopted: *comparato* instead of *comparata*.

<sup>88</sup> B and Gel (edition of Sigismundus Gelenius, Basel 1550) have *quo*. W. von Hartel: *quod*: Id., *Patristische Studien* 1 (Wien 1890) 55. G. Thörnell, *Studia Tertullianea* 2 (U.U.Å.; Uppsala 1918-1926), 2-3 refuting von Hartel's proposal was in favour of the traditional reading *quo*. Cf. H. Hoppe, *De sermone Tertulliano quaestiones selectae* (Marburg 1897) 55.

<sup>89</sup> In B: *Christianum*.

<sup>90</sup> In the notes from the edition of Franciscus Iunius (a reprint of J. Pamelius edition from 1579 with Iunius' own notes, Franeker 1597 – see SuppVC 1,5) we find *in fide* instead of *in fidem*.

<sup>91</sup> The words *perseverent, non observantes* are omitted in the edition of N. Rigault (Paris 1634). This edition was the first one based on the *Codex Agobardinus* (SuppVC 1,5). Cf. A. Reifferscheid (CSEL 20, Vindobonae 1890). Hartel, *Patristische*, 56 refutes Rigault's omission.

<sup>92</sup> Tertullian, *De idol.* 24,2-3 (SuppVC 1,68.70). Translation: "(...) Nothing can be easier than to guard against idolatry, if the fear of it is put above everything else. Every necessity, whatever it may be, is of less importance if compared to such a danger. Therefore at the time of the council of the apostles, the Holy Spirit relieved our fetters and our yoke, in order that we should devote ourselves to the shunning of idolatry. This shall be our law. Since it is so light, it must be carried out more fully. It is a law peculiar to the Christians and by it the heathens recognize and test us. It must be held up to those who are joining the faith and must be inculcated in those who enter the faith, in order that they consider it when they join, persevere in observing, and renounce themselves, when they do not observe it": Transl. J.H. Waszink – J.C.M. van Winden (SuppVC 1,69.71).

It should first be noted that Tertullian does not explicitly mention in the text that the source he used is the Acts of the Apostles. Nevertheless, taking into account that Tertullian in 9,6 also refers to other stories that are described in Acts (namely Acts 8:9-24; 13:6-11), it seems plausible to accept that the author took the information about the Apostolic Council from a manuscript of Acts rather than from another unknown source.

As regards the contents of the reference, Tertullian explicitly mentions only one prohibition: abstaining from idolatry. The followers of Christ were relieved from other observances in order to keep the most important one: shunning idolatry. The fact that Tertullian mentions only one prohibition here instead of the three that appear in his later work *De pudicitia* can be explained by Tertullian's broad understanding of idolatry. According to him, all sins are contained in idolatry<sup>93</sup> and *homicidium* (murder), *adulterium* (adultery), *stuprum* (dishonour by unchastity) and *fraus* (fraud) are especially linked with it.<sup>94</sup> Thus, it seems that in *De idol.* Tertullian did not mention other prohibitions because they were already covered by the prohibition of idolatry. This way, the necessity of shunning idolatry was greatly emphasized which was very much in line with the contents of *De idol.* and Tertullian's purpose of writing it.

Now, we should examine the second instance of Tertullian's reference to the apostolic prohibitions mentioned in Acts. It occurs in *De pudicitia*, a treatise written by Tertullian possibly between 217 and 222 although this timeframe is by no means certain.<sup>95</sup> The Latin text reads as follows:

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<sup>93</sup> *Nam etsi suam speciem tenet unumquodque delictum, etsi suo quoque nomine iudicio destinatur, in idololatriae tamen crimine expungitur.* Tertullian, *De idol.* 1,1 (SuppVC 1,22-23). Translation: "For even if every sin retains its own identity and even if each is destined for judgement under its own name, each is still committed within idolatry": Transl. J.H. Waszink – J.C.M. van Winden (SuppVC 1,22-23).

<sup>94</sup> Tertullian, *De idol.* 1,1-3 (SuppVC 1,22-23).

<sup>95</sup> About issues concerning the dating of *Pud.* Cf. C. Micaelli, SC 394,9-38.

*Nos in apostolis quoque ueteris legis forma soluta cernimus moechiae quanta sit demonstrationem, ne forte lenior existimetur in nouitate disciplinarum quam in uetustate. Cum primum intonuit euangelium et uetera concussit, ut de legis retinendae necessitate disceptaretur, primum hanc regulam de auctoritate Spiritus sancti apostoli emittunt ad eos qui iam ex nationibus allegi coeperant. Visum est, inquiunt, Spiritui sancto et nobis nullum amplius uobis adicere pondus quam eorum a quibus necesse est abstinere, a sacrificiis et a fornicationibus et sanguine. A quibus obseruando recte agetis uetante uos Spiritu sancto. Sufficit et hic seruatum esse moechiae et fornicationi locum honoris sui inter idololatriam et homicidium. Interdictum enim sanguinis multo magis humani intellegemus.*<sup>96</sup>

There are some notable differences between the text of Acts 15:29 cited by Tertullian in the above mentioned fragment of *Pud.* and other Western texts:

A) εἰδωλοθύτων is not translated as *ab idolothyta* or *ab immolatis simulacrorum*, but *a sacrificiis*. It has to be noted that the word *idolothyta* was not only known, but also used by Tertullian in *Pud.* when he cited other scriptural verses whose Greek versions contain the word εἰδωλοθύτα.<sup>97</sup>

B) The content of quotation shows that Tertullian is citing Acts 15:28-29. The order of the prohibitions, however, is typical for the Western text of Acts 15:20: unchastity is placed between sacrifices and blood.

C) Tertullian translates πορνεία (singular) with the plural *fornicationibus*.

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<sup>96</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* 12.2-5 (SC 394,202.204). Translation: "We also recognise in [the teaching of] the apostles certain form of the Old Law with regard to the demonstration of adultery, how great (a sin) it is; lest by chance it was considered more trivial at the time of the new disciplines than in the old. When first the Gospel thundered and shook what was old, so that a decision may be taken as regards the necessity of keeping the Law, the apostles, on the authority of the Holy Spirit, sent this first rule to those who were already beginning to be gathered out of the nations. It has seemed (good), they say, to the Holy Spirit and to us to put on you no ampler weight than the things from which it is necessary to abstain, from sacrifices, from fornications and from blood. By observing these rules, you will act rightly and the Holy Spirit will be carrying you [or: restraining yourselves with the help of the Holy Spirit]. It is fitting that the place of honour between idolatry and murder was given to adultery and immorality. For the prohibition of blood we understand as referring much more to human beings" (translation mine).

<sup>97</sup> In Tertullian, *Pud.* 14,11 partial citation of 1 Cor 8:7.12 is given and in 19,1 the citation of Rev 2:20.

D) The Golden Rule does not appear in the Tertullian's quotation of Acts 15:29. Tertullian, however, includes in it a phrase similar to the one found in the *Codex Bezae* of Acts and in Irenaeus' quotation of Acts 15:29 (*Adv. haer.* III.12.14). This addition occurs in the final part of the quotation of Acts 15:29 in *Pud.* and reads as follows: *uetante uos Spiritu sancto* (as found in 14<sup>th</sup>-century *Codex Ottobonianus*, followed here by critical editions of CCL and SC) or *uectante uos Spiritu sancto* (*editio princeps Martini Mesnartii* from 1545). The latter version, not supported by the modern critical editions, is closer in meaning to the phrase in the *Codex Bezae* of Acts; it may have been a result of harmonization with the more diffused version of the Western text of Acts.

It is possible that Tertullian was quoting the text of Acts from a Latin translation which is not extant today. Nevertheless, it could well be that Tertullian simply quoted the Scripture from memory. Quoting from memory would explain the omissions, word differences and the enumeration of the prohibitions according to the order found in Acts 15:20 in the citation of Acts 15:29.

First it is necessary to analyse the meaning of the prohibitions according to *Pud.* 12. Abstaining from sacrifices (*sacrificiis*) is mentioned as the first prohibition. It is noteworthy that in the following sentence Tertullian calls the same prohibition idolatry (*idololatria*). Moreover, as already mentioned above, Tertullian does not use the word *idolothyta* to denote this prohibition. Thus, it appears that Tertullian understands this prohibition in a broader sense, i.e., as a ban on all kinds of activities connected with offering pagan sacrifices.

As regards the second prohibition, Tertullian uses the word *fornicatio* in plural: *a fornicationibus*. After providing the quotation from Acts, Tertullian ironically adds that to adultery and fornication (*moechiae et fornicationi*) the place of honour is given between the other two prohibitions. This remark suggests that Tertullian understood the word *fornicationibus* as adultery and fornication (or unchastity in general). Through this ironic remark, Tertullian

emphasizes once more the gravity of these immoral deeds labelled as *fornicationes*.<sup>98</sup>

Tertullian's statement in *Pud.* about abstaining from blood is the most thought provoking. It is clear that abstaining from blood is interpreted in this treatise as shunning murder (*homicidium*). Still, the sentence: *Interdictum enim sanguinis multo magis humani intellegemus*, especially the words *multo magis* indicate that the just mentioned understanding of the prohibition of blood is the preferable one, but not the only one. We shall return to this matter later.

Thus, Tertullian in *Pud.* interprets the three prohibitions as the commandments forbidding idolatry, adultery (and other unchaste acts) as well as murder. In line with wider Christian thought, Tertullian holds these commandments as absolutely binding and not possible to change in the future. He puts it very clearly in the words following his quotation of the Apostolic Decree:

*Nouissimi testamenti semper indemutabilis<sup>99</sup> status est, et utique recitatio decreti consiliumque illud cum saeculo desinet.<sup>100</sup>*

Moreover, in *Pud.* Tertullian not only acknowledges the Apostolic Council's prohibitions as immutable, but also claims that idolatry, adultery and murder cannot be forgiven by the mediation of human beings. According to him, if someone commits one of these sins as a baptised Christian, it becomes a non-remissible sin for him:

*Porro qualia uideri uolunt apostoli crimina, quae sola in obseruatione de lege pristina excerpunt, quae sola necessario abstinenda praescribunt? Non quod alia*

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Tertullian, *Pud.* 5,15 (SC 394,166.168); 12,2 (SC 394,202).

<sup>99</sup> This word is a neologism created by Tertullian and was used after its creation only by Christian authors: C. Micaelli, SC 395,388.

<sup>100</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* 12,10 (SC 394,206). Translation: "Of the latest Testament the condition is ever immutable; and, of course the public recitation of that decree, and the counsel embodied therein, will cease (only) with the world": Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 4,86.

*permittant, sed quod haec sola praeponant utique non remissibilia, qui ethnicorum causa cetera legis onera remissibilia fecerunt.*<sup>101</sup>

According to Tertullian, the sins against the Apostolic Council's prohibitions are not the only existing non-remissible sins. As we learn from *Pud.* 19,25<sup>102</sup>, he also considers fraud (*fraus*), denial (*negatio*), blasphemy (*blasphemia*) and any other violation of the temple of God (*si qua alia uiolatio templi Dei*) as non-remissible.

It has to be mentioned, however, that Tertullian did not understand non-remissibility of sins in an absolute sense. Such sins cannot be pardoned by human beings on behalf of God, but they are left to the direct judgment of God who alone can pardon them to the penitent sinner.<sup>103</sup>

In order to get the full picture of Tertullian's interpretation of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions, we need to take into due consideration his other statements about the prohibitions. These comments are scattered among his other writings and do not contain any direct references, neither to Acts nor to the Apostolic Council; they are, however, thematically linked with the contents of the Apostolic Decree.

From the chronological point of view,<sup>104</sup> Tertullian's statements from *Apologeticum* should be analysed first.

In chapter 9 of *Apologeticum* (*Apology*), written about 197, Tertullian refutes pagan accusations against Christians. The followers of Christ were

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<sup>101</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* 12,6 (SC 394,204). Translation: "Well, then, in what light do the apostles will those crimes to appear which alone they select, in the way of careful guarding against, from the pristine Law? Which alone they prescribe as necessarily to be abstained from? Not that they permit others; but that these alone they put in the foremost rank, of course as not remissible; (they,) who, for the heathens' sake, made the other burdens of the law remissible": Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 4,86.

<sup>102</sup> SC 394,260.

<sup>103</sup> Cf. C. Micaelli, SC 394,64; Tertullian, *Pud.* 19,6 (SC 394,254).

<sup>104</sup> There are many controversies with regard to the chronology of Tertullian's literary works. I am following here the chronology published in CCL 2,1627-8 (based on A. Harnack, *Die Chronologie der Altchristlichen Litteratur von Irenaeus bis Eusebius II* (Leipzig 1904) 256-296; P. Monceaux, *Histoire littéraire de l'Afrique chrétienne depuis les origines jusqu'à l'invasion arabe. Tome 1. Tertullien et les origines* (Paris 1901)).



accused of committing ritual murders and ritual cannibalism.<sup>105</sup> In his defense of Christians, Tertullian uses an interesting *a fortiori* argument, namely an *a minorem ad maius* type of it. Here is the relevant Latin text:

*Erubescat error vester Christianis, qui ne animalium quidem sanguinem in epulis esculentis habemus, qui propterea suffocatis quoque et morticinis abstinemus, ne quo [modo] sanguine contaminemur vel intra viscera sepulto. Denique inter temptamenta Christianorum botulos etiam cruore distensos admovetis, certissimi scilicet illicitum esse penes illos, per quod exorbitare eos vultis. Porro quale est, ut quos sanguinem pecoris horrere confiditis, humano inhiare credatis, nisi forte suaviorem eum experti?*<sup>106</sup>

We could rephrase Tertullian's argument with the following words: Christians eat neither the blood of animals nor meat containing blood of an animal and this is well known to pagans. Consequently, it is unreasonable to hold that Christians, so strictly abstaining from animal's blood, are eager for consumption of human blood.

We can see that Tertullian knew and approved of the prohibition against eating blood, although in *Apol.* he does not link it explicitly with Acts 15:20.29. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that Tertullian also mentions abstaining from what was strangled. The word *suffocatis* employed by him here is the Latin equivalent of the Greek  $\piνικτόν$ . However, the use of this word by Tertullian cannot be taken as a proof of his knowledge about the existence of the Eastern text of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25. It is true that both the Greek adjective  $\piνικτόν$  in any of its forms and *suffocatum*, its Latin equivalent, were rarely used in ancient Greek and Latin literature and this

<sup>105</sup> See Tertullian, *Apol.* 7,1 (CCL 1,98). Translation: T.R. Glover, LCL 250,37.

<sup>106</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* 9,13-14 (CCL 1,104). Translation: "Let your error blush before the Christians, for we do not include even animals' blood in our natural diet. We abstain on that account from things strangled or that die of themselves, that we may not in any way be polluted by blood, even if it is buried in the meat. Finally, when you are testing Christians, you offer them sausages full of blood; you are thoroughly well aware, of course, that among them it is forbidden; but you want to make them transgress. Now, I ask you, what sort of a thing is it, that when you are confident they will turn with horror from animals' blood, you should suppose them greedy for human blood—unless perhaps you yourselves have found it sweeter?": Transl. T.R. Glover (LCL 250,51.53).

may suggest that Tertullian borrowed it from the Eastern version of Acts. Nevertheless, the arguments against Tertullian's knowledge of the Eastern version seem stronger. At least three of them can be enumerated:

A) *Pud.* where the Western version of Acts 15:20 is quoted, is one of the latest writings of Tertullian. One would expect that if he had known the Eastern version, he would have shown knowledge of it in this literary work.

B) Other Christian writers from Proconsular Africa (Cyprian, Augustine) also quote the Western version only.

C) Tertullian, apart from mentioning strangled animals, provides also other examples of food from which Christians abstain because of a blood component in them: an animal that died of itself (*morticinis* from *morticinum*) and blood sausage or black pudding (*botulos* from *botulus*). These words do not occur in any version of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, they only illustrate blood consumption prohibition in practice so, taking this into account, it seems that the term *suffocatis* has the same illustrative role as well.

Consequently, an opinion that Tertullian must have taken the word denoting strangled animals from an Eastern version of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 is not very convincing. On the other hand, Tertullian might have known the Apostolic Council's decisions in its Eastern version from other sources,<sup>107</sup> e.g., from oral transmission. This would explain why he cites the Western text and at the same time has the knowledge about abstaining from strangled animals.

In *Apol.* 9, Tertullian also gives an answer to another unfounded accusation against Christians, mentioned by him already in *Apol.* 7,1: a practice of incest. As in the case of the above mentioned accusation, Tertullian in his turn accuses pagans of hypocrisy and gives examples of pagans who practice incest and of pagan customs which facilitate practicing

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<sup>107</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 180-181.

incest. As to Christians, he gives a compelling testimony of Christian approach to sexuality:

*Nos ab isto eventu diligentissima et fidelissima castitas saepsit, quantumque ab stupris et ab omni post matrimonium excessu, tantum et ab incesti casu tuti sumus. Quidam multo securiores totam vim huius erroris virgine continentia depellunt, senes pueri. Haec in vobis esse si consideraretis, proinde in Christianis non esse perspiceretis.*<sup>108</sup>

Tertullian again uses an *a minore ad maius* argumentation: Christians keep themselves free from unchastity of any sort and from adultery. Some Christians even do not get married and remain sexually inactive. If this is a case, how could they practice something so horrible as incest?

This passage is helpful for understanding Tertullian's interpretation of abstaining from *fornicationibus*, the term he uses to describe one of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions in *Pud.* In *Apol.* 9,19 he makes it clear that any sort of activity that can be called *stuprum* (which most likely denotes here any kind of unchaste behaviour), all extra-marital affairs and all the more incest are totally unacceptable for Christians. This observation corroborates the view that he understood the above mentioned prohibition as shunning all kinds of sexual immorality.

In another literary work of Tertullian, *De spectaculis*, we find a passage thematically linked with the Apostolic Council's prohibition of *sacrificiis* as it was quoted by Tertullian in *Pud.* In ch. 13, Tertullian argues against the participation of Christians in pagan shows because of their connection with honouring the idols. Tertullian, quoting the words of 1 Cor 10:19, clarifies that idols do not really exist. He states, however, that demons do exist and they occupy the places dedicated to idols and the dead.

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<sup>108</sup> Tertullian, *Apol.* 9,19-20 (CCL 1,105). Translation: "As for us, an ever-watchful and steadfast chastity shields us from such an occurrence and, in so far as we refrain from adultery and every excess after marriage, we are safe, too, from the danger of incest. Some are even more secure, since they ward off the entire violence of this error by virginal continence, and as old men are still [as pure as] boys. If you would realize that these sins exist among yourselves, then you would perceive clearly that they do not exist among Christians": Transl. E.J. Daly, FC.NT 10,34-35.

Consequently, if someone worships an idol or a dead person, he/she worships a demon. Following this explanation, Tertullian writes:

*Nec minus templa quam monumenta despuimus: neutram aram nouimus, neutram effigiem adoramus, non sacrificamus, non parentamus; sed neque de sacrificio et parentato edimus, quia non possumus cenam Dei edere et cenam daemoniorum. Si ergo gulam et uentrem ab inquinamentis liberamus, quanto magis augustiora nostra, oculos et aures, ab idolothytis et necrothytis uoluptatibus abstinemus, quae non intestinis transiguntur, sed in ipso spiritu et anima digeruntur: quorum munditia magis ad Deum pertinet quam intestinorum.*<sup>109</sup>

In the text above, alongside mentioning abstaining from different activities associated with idolatry, Tertullian also describes abstaining from consumption of what was offered (*sacrificatum*) whether to idols (*idolothytum*) or to the dead (*necrothytum*). The reason for doing this he finds in the words of Paul from 1 Cor 10:21: “You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons”. Tertullian uses the Christian practice of shunning food sacrificed to idols, as an argument in favour of shunning pagan shows: if throat and belly are kept by Christians free from the defilement of idolatry, how much more nobler parts of a body, namely eyes and ears should be. Tertullian once again uses an *a minore ad maius* argument here.

For the purposes of this investigation, it is possible to conclude that:

A) By the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the practice of abstaining from food offered to idols seems to have become well established and not controversial for Christians, at least from the areas known to Tertullian.

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<sup>109</sup> Tertullian, *Spec.* 13,4-5 (SC 332,218.220). Translation: “Temples or tombs, we abominate both equally; we know neither sort of altar; we adore neither sort of image; we pay no sacrifice; we pay no funeral rite. No, and we do not eat of what is offered in sacrificial or funeral rite, because ‘we cannot eat of the Lord’s supper and the supper of demons’. If then we try to keep our gullet and belly free from defilement, how much more our nobler parts, our eyes and ears, do we guard from the pleasures of idol sacrifice and sacrifice to the dead — pleasures not of gut and digestion, but of spirit, soul and suggestion — and it is purity of these far more than of the intestines that God has a right to claim of us”: Transl.: T.R. Glover (LCL 250,267.269).

B) Tertullian considered it as less important than abstaining from watching pagan shows.

*De praescriptione haereticorum* is another text written by Tertullian possibly in more or less the same period of time as *De spectaculis* (198-204). In this apologetic work written to help Christians not to get seduced into various groups of sectarian characteristics, Tertullian shortly refers to Rev 2:14:

*Ioannes uero in Apocalypsi idolothyta edentes et stupra committentes iubetur castigare (...)*<sup>110</sup>

Tertullian uses the authority of Revelation to show that eating food offered to idols and committing unchaste acts is against true Christian teaching. Nevertheless, he does not provide here any further details which would tell us more about his understanding of these prohibitions.

Further details are to be found in his work *De corona militis*. In ch.10 of this text we read:

*Si enim uerbo nudo conditio polluitur, – ut apostolus docet: « Si quis autem dixerit: hoc idolothytum est, ne contigeris », – multo magis, cum saltitaueris habitu et ritu et apparatu idolothytorum, contaminatur.*<sup>111</sup>

In this text, Tertullian quotes 1 Cor 10:28. He uses his own interpretation of this quotation to form a *minore ad maius* argument against wearing crowns by Christians. Tertullian interprets the information about the

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<sup>110</sup> Tertullian, *De praescriptione haereticorum* 33,10 (SC 46.134). Translation: "As to John, in Book of Revelation he receives a command to punish those who eat food sacrificed to idols and commit unchaste acts" (translation mine).

<sup>111</sup> Tertullian, *De cor.* 10,5 (CCL 2,1054). Translation: "If the creature is defiled by a mere word, as the apostle teaches, 'But if any one say, This is offered in sacrifice to idols, you must not touch it', much more when it is polluted by the dress, and rites, and pomp of what is offered to the gods": Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 3,99.

idolatrous provenance of food as defilement by word.<sup>112</sup> And if something can be defiled even by a word, all the more can it be defiled by a deed. This text is another example of Tertullian's negative attitude to the consumption of food offered to idols.

Another text relevant to our research can be found in Tertullian's treatise *De monogamia* (*Mon.*). This work was written by him after 213 and presents his perspective on marriage. The relevant text reads as follows:

*Et adeo in Christo omnia reuocantur ad initium, ut et fides reuersa sit a circumcissione ad integritatem carnis illius, sicut ab initio fuit, et libertas ciborum et sanguinis solius abstinentia, sicut ab initio fuit, et matrimonii indiuiduitas, sicut ab initio fuit, et repudii cohibitio, quod ab initio non fuit, et postremo totus homo in paradysum reuocatur, ubi ab initio fuit.*<sup>113</sup>

Tertullian argues that Christ, who is the beginning and the end, directs everything to the beginning. He refers to Matt. 19:8 in which Christ explains the reason for divorce permission given by Moses, indicating that the practice in this matter was different in the beginning.<sup>114</sup> This beginning is interpreted by Tertullian as the times of Adam and the times of Noah.<sup>115</sup> In this way, as it can be seen in the text quoted above, Christians are called not to practice

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<sup>112</sup> Tertullian's interpretation of 1 Cor 10:28 is not justified if we take the immediate context of this biblical verse into account. 1 Cor 10:27 contains an instruction allowing Christians to eat anything served to them in non-Christian households. Nevertheless, if they are informed that certain food has been offered to idols, they should not eat it for the sake of the person who passed this information to them (1 Cor 10:28). The following verse confirms the reason of this ruling: abstaining from such food should be done out of respect for the conscience of the informer, not for the conscience of the informed person. Consequently, the only reason for not eating this type of food is avoidance of scandalizing another fellow Christian, not an imaginary defilement by word.

<sup>113</sup> Tertullian, *Mon.* 5,3(4) (SC 343,150). Translation: "And so truly in Christ are all things recalled to their beginning, that the faith has turned away from circumcision back to the integrity of the flesh, as it was from the beginning. So, too, there is liberty now to eat of any kind of food, with abstention from blood alone, as it was in the beginning. There is unity of marriage, as it was in the beginning. There is prohibition of divorce, which was not in the beginning. Finally, the whole man is called once more to Paradise, where he was in the beginning": Transl. W.P. Le Saint, ACW 13,79.

<sup>114</sup> Tertullian, *Mon.* 5,1(1) (SC 343,148). Translation: W.P. Le Saint, ACW 13,78.

<sup>115</sup> Tertullian, *Mon.* 5,4(5) (SC 343,150). Translation: W.P. Le Saint, ACW 13,79-80.

circumcision nor divorce because they were not practiced in the time of Adam and Noah. They are also called to the marriage between a man and a woman without a possibility for a remarriage and finally they are called to enter Paradise. A Christian is also called to freedom in eating all kinds of food except blood as stipulated by the commandments given to Noah. Thus, *Mon.* 5,3(4) provides an explanation of Tertullian's support for blood consumption prohibition: the binding force of the law given by God to Noah. One would expect that Tertullian should mention here food offered to idols as another exception from *libertas ciborum* in order to be consistent with his previous writings. Nevertheless, this lack of inclusion of *idolothya* does not seem to signalize Tertullian's change of mind in this regard. The question of food in *Mon.* is tackled only in order to illustrate the main argument of the treatise so, as a consequence, one cannot expect a comprehensive exposition of this theme.

This argument is corroborated by a statement in another work of Tertullian, *De ieiunio*, written later than *Mon.* In chapter 4 of this treatise, Tertullian explains why blood prohibition was the only dietary restriction given by God to Noah.

*...non competisse onerari hominem aliqua adhuc abstinentione lege, qui cum maxime tam leuem interdictionem unius scilicet pomi tolerare non potuit; remissum itaque illum libertate ipsa corroborandum. Aequae post diluvium in reformatione generis humani suffecisse unam interim legem a sanguine abstinendi permissu usu ceterorum.*<sup>116</sup>

In other words, the exclusivity of the blood prohibition as a dietary prescription at the times of Noah was a result of the weakness of the humankind which was taken into account by God.

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<sup>116</sup> Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 4,3 (CCL 2,1260). Translation : "...it was not suitable for man to be burdened with any further special law of abstinence, who so recently showed himself unable to tolerate so light an interdiction – of one single fruit, to wit; that, accordingly, having had the rein relaxed, he was to be strengthened by his very liberty; that equally after the deluge, in the reformation of the human race (...), one law – of abstaining from blood – was sufficient, the use of all things else being allowed": Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 4,104.

In chapter 15 of the same treatise, another of Tertullian's statements relevant to the topic of this thesis can be found. In this chapter, Tertullian opposes those who hold certain types of food in contempt, but lauds those, who, while not despising anything created by God, abstain from different kinds of alimentary products for the glory of God. Perpetual abstinence from certain types of food "to the extent of destroying and despising the works of the Creator"<sup>117</sup> is unacceptable for Tertullian; nevertheless, temporary fasting practices are, in his opinion, commendable in certain periods of time. To prove his point, Tertullian quotes first Rom 14:20.21 and then Rom 14:2-4. After a brief comment how these texts relate to his opinion, Tertullian continues his reflection on food in the following words:

*Et si claves macelli tibi tradidit permittens esui omnia ad constituendam idolothytorum exceptionem, non tamen in macello regnum dei inclusit. Nec enim, inquit, esus aut potus est dei regnum, et, esca nos deo non commendat, non ut de arida dictum putes, sed potius de uncta et accurata, siquidem subiciens : nec si manducauerimus, abundabimus, nec si non manducauerimus, deficiemus, tibi magis intonat, qui abundare te existimas, si edas, et deficere, si non edas, et ideo ista detractas.*<sup>118</sup>

With regard to this passage, the following must be observed: In Rom 14, whose fragments are cited by Tertullian in chapter 15 of *De ieiunio*<sup>119</sup>, we find Paul's permission for Christians to eat all kinds of food. Nevertheless, Paul states that, although all food is, in reality, clean, it would be wrong for someone to eat it if such consumption involved:

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<sup>117</sup> Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 4,112. Cf. Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 15.1 (CCL 2,1273).

<sup>118</sup> Tertullian, *De ieiunio* 15.5 (CCL 2,1273-1274). "And if he has 'delivered you the keys of the meat-market,' permitting the eating of 'all things' with a view to establishing the exception of things offered to idols; still he has not included the kingdom of God in the meat-market: 'For,' he says, 'the kingdom of God is neither meat nor drink' and, 'Food commendeth us not to God' – not that you may think this said about *dry* diet, but rather about rich and carefully prepared, if, when he subjoins, 'Neither, if we shall have eaten, shall we abound; nor, if we shall not have eaten, shall we be deficient,' the ring of his words suits, (as it does), you rather (than us), who think that you do 'abound' if you eat, and are 'deficient if you eat not; and for this reason disparage these observances': Transl. S. Thelwall, ANF 4,112.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Rom 14:2-4.20-21.



- A) Acting against one's own conviction (if someone is convinced that certain kinds of food are unclean, but eats them altogether).
- B) Scandalizing others (i.e., causing them to act against their own conviction).

Tertullian does not quote these exceptions very clearly and does not comment on them. Instead, he seems to state that Paul permitted Christians to eat everything, but later introduced an exception consisting of abstaining from food offered to idols. He might be referring to Paul's statement in 1 Cor 10:20-21, but this is not certain. In any event, the above mentioned text of *De ieiunio*, although testifying to Tertullian's support for the prohibition of eating *idolothyta*, leaves a reader with an impression that he treated this prohibition as valid for participating in the consumption of sacrifices during pagan rituals. Moreover, the words about *macellum* ("meat-market") evoke 1 Cor 10:25 where the only New Testament occurrence of this term (in the Greek form *μάκελλον*) is found. This detail and the common theme of *De ieiunio* 15 and 1 Cor 10:25 suggest that Tertullian, mentioning "keys to the meat-market" given to Christians as well as mentioning non-including "the kingdom of God in the meat market", refers to Paul's permission from 1 Cor 10:25 to eat any kind of meat bought in the market without investigation of its possible sacrificial provenance. In this way, Tertullian, while being opposed to the consumption of sacrifices in the pagan temples, seems to be open for eating all meats by Christians in the non-ritualistic context.

In conclusion, the following observations can be noted:

- A) As already mentioned above, Tertullian knew the Western type of Acts 15:20.29. His infrequent use of the rare word *suffocatis* in *Apol.* 9.13 does not constitute an evidence of Tertullian's knowledge of another version of Acts 15:20.29. The fact that alongside *suffocatis* he also mentions *morticinum* and *botulus*, which are not found in any version of Acts 15:20.29, suggests that biblical verses do not constitute the source of *suffocatis* in

*Apol.*, but all these three terms were used as exemplifications of blood consumption prohibition. Nevertheless, it is probable that Tertullian's knowledge of the word *suffocatis* has its origin in an oral transmission of Apostolic Decree or, as Wehnert believes, in other non-biblical text containing the decisions of the Council.<sup>120</sup>

B) An attempt at summarizing Tertullian's comments concerning the prohibitions generates certain difficulties because at times his statements seem to contradict one another. This fact does not necessarily mean that Tertullian was changing his mind with regard to some issues. Contradictions among his comments are usually the result of his personality and his polemic writing style which focuses on the main argument of a particular treatise to the extent of neglecting the auxiliary details. J.W. Waszink and J.C.M. van Winden put it well in their introduction to *De idololatria*:

*One needs to take the nature of his [Tertullian's] writings into account, and this is closely related to his personality. Tertullian writes in order to dispute, not in order to theorize; and he is a man with a highly aggressive temperament. Moreover, the immediate object at which he is aiming in a certain line of argument often dominates him to such an extent, that it is to this alone that his attention is directed, to the neglect of all other concerns.*<sup>121</sup>

Thus, it seems that deficiencies in coherence among Tertullian's comments on matters related to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions are better explained by his passionate rhetoric rather than by his wilful change of mind.

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<sup>120</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 202-203.

<sup>121</sup> SuppVC 1,11. An interesting example of this, taken from P.G. Van der Nat's manuscript, is provided on the same page: "...Tertullian is completely dominated by his desire to prove that artisans can provide for themselves sufficiently without having to enter the service of idols. One of his examples is that more wreaths are needed for purposes of luxurious living than for religious ceremonies. Evidently it escapes Tertullian's notice that in this way he sanctions – and even recommends – the occupation of a maker of wreaths, although elsewhere he regards the wearing of wreaths as unlawful in any circumstances and forbids Christians to be of assistance to others in what they themselves are not allowed to do" (Cf. Tertullian, *Apol.* 42,6; Tertullian, *De cor.* 5-6).

C) Summarising Tertullian's understanding of the prohibitions, let us begin with the first one mentioned by him in *Pud* 12. Already in this very text, it is denoted first as abstaining from sacrifices (*a sacrificiis*) and in the next sentence the word "sacrifices" is substituted with the term "idolatry" (*idololatria*). Taking also into account *De idol.* 24,2-3 as well as other above mentioned texts, it is reasonable to conclude that Tertullian understood sacrifices as a *pars-pro-toto* expression denoting not only pagan sacrificial offerings, but also all other kinds of idol worship, e.g., watching pagan shows or wearing pagan wreaths. In a broader sense, Tertullian understood idolatry as the main sin which contains all other sins in it.

Nevertheless, according to Tertullian, not all forms of idolatry have the same gravity. Here we can find some inconsistency in Tertullian's thought (cf. the point above). Van der Nat provides us with a good example of this lack of coherence in Tertullian's judgment in this matter. It is noteworthy that his different opinions occur in the same treatise: *De idololatria*. Van der Nat writes:

*In ch. 4 Tertullian declares the makers of idols and the worshippers to be equally at fault, but in ch. 6 he argues that it is actually the makers of idols who are worshippers par excellence and in fact practise idolatry to a greater degree than the ordinary worshippers. After this he declares that the making of attributes belonging to idols is even more important and, accordingly, an even more grievous sin (ch. 8). Finally in ch. 11, however, it is the trade in frankincense which is considered to be the principal form of idolatry.*<sup>122</sup>

Nevertheless, eating food offered to idols, although not acceptable and condemned by Rev 2:14 (*De praes. haer.* 33,10), seems to be for Tertullian less serious than participating in pagan shows or wearing wreaths associated with idolatrous rituals (Cf. *Spec.* 13,4-5, *De cor.* 10,5). Moreover, taking into consideration *De ieiunio* 15 and an attempt at its interpretation presented above, it appears that Tertullian did not consider as idolatrous the practise of buying in the market the meat previously used for sacrificial

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<sup>122</sup> SuppVC 1,11.

purposes and eating it, provided that no one informed the purchaser about the meat's provenance (cf. *De cor.* 10,5).

D) Abstaining from *fornicationes* is mentioned by Tertullian in *Pud.* 12 as the second prohibition. These *fornicationes*, exemplified by Tertullian in the same text as *moechia* (adultery) and *fornicatio* are best understood as denoting all types of immoral sexual behaviour. This interpretation is corroborated by the already quoted statement from *Apol.* 9,19 where Tertullian uses synonyms of *moechia* and *fornicatio* testifying to Christian serious commitment to chastity.

E) The blood prohibition from Acts 15:29 is understood by Tertullian in two ways: First of all, it is a condemnation of murder and as such it is immutable. The second meaning concerns shunning blood consumption. *Apol.* 9 testifies that the practice of abstaining from eating blood and from eating food containing blood was known and kept by Christians in North Africa at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. Nevertheless, it seems quite clear that this dietary tradition was for Tertullian much less important than the prohibition of *homicidium*.<sup>123</sup> It is true that in *Mon.* 5,3(4) abstinence from blood consumption appears to be treated as a serious ethical imperative on the grounds that it was given to Noah, the father of all humanity, as portrayed by Gen. This might be, however, one more example of Tertullian's passionate and not always consistent rhetoric (as explained in point 2 above), all the more that the reference to blood consumption occurs in *Mon.* only once and the purpose of this occurrence is to highlight Tertullian's main argument in this treatise – the individuality of marriage. Tertullian was certainly convinced of the validity of blood consumption prohibition in his times, on the other hand; however, he appears to hold it as a proscription of

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Tertullian's already quoted comment from *Pud.* 12,5: *Interdictum enim sanguinis multo magis humani intellegemus.*

lesser importance and possibly subject to change in the future. Such an interpretation seems to be supported by his text from *De ieiunio* 15, which has already been partially quoted. In it, the prohibition of blood consumption is not mentioned at all although this chapter is particularly dedicated to the analysis of apostolic teaching about dietary rules.

Summary:

A) Verses: A quotation of Acts 15:29 with a commentary on the prohibitions; a reference to Acts 15:29 with a commentary.

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western (with no Golden Rule).

C) Number of prohibitions: 3 (quotation), 1 (reference).

D) Tertullian's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) (*...ut idololatriae devitandae vacaremus*) / *abstinere a sacrificiis*: In a broader sense, shunning all sins because all sins are manifestations of idolatry. In a stricter sense, shunning everything pertaining to the worship of idols, e.g. watching pagan shows or offering and consumption of sacrifices. It has to be noted that consumption of sacrifices was not regarded by Tertullian as the greatest form of idolatry. He also appears to allow eating all meats bought in the market without making any investigations as to their provenance.

b) *Abstinere a fornicationibus*: Shunning all kinds of sexual immorality.

c) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Primarily, shunning murder. Secondly, shunning blood consumption.

### 3. Cyprian of Carthage

Cyprian (ca. 200-258), a convert to Christianity, who later became a bishop of Carthage was, after Tertullian, another prolific writer from this city. Among his writings, we find a selection of quotations from the Bible which was prepared by Cyprian in the years 246-248 for a wealthy man named

Quirinius who wanted to deepen his knowledge of the Sacred Scripture.<sup>124</sup> This compilation, known as *Ad Quirinum (Testimoniorum libri tres)*<sup>125</sup>, contains three lists of short catechetical formulae accompanied by one or more passages from the Bible quoted to prove the validity of a given statement.<sup>126</sup>

Acts 15:29 occurs once among these biblical quotations. It can be found in Book III at number 119. It is the last biblical quotation at this number, and it is preceded by other two citations from the Bible. The opening statement reads as follows:

*Grave fuisse iugum legis quod a nobis abiectum est et leue esse iugum Domini quod a nobis susceptum est.*<sup>127</sup>

The first biblical quotation comes from Ps 2:1-3:

*In psalmo I:*<sup>128</sup> *Ad quid tumultuatae sunt gentes et populi meditati sunt inania? Adstiterunt reges terrae et principes collecti sunt in unum aduersus Dominum et aduersus Christum eius. Disrumpamus uincula eorum et abiciamus a nobis iugum eorum.*<sup>129</sup>

<sup>124</sup> A. Lukyn Williams, *Adversus Iudaeos. A Bird's Eye View of Christian Apologiae until Renaissance* (Cambridge 2012) 66.

<sup>125</sup> According to CSEL 3/1,33. Sometimes an alternative title *Ad Quirinum testimonia adversus Iudaeos* is used; Cf. *The SBL Handbook of Style. For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines* (Atlanta, Georgia: SBL<sup>2</sup> 2014) 149. To find more about the title, see CSEL 3/1,35.

<sup>126</sup> More about Cyprian's New Testament quotations in: H.F. von Soden, *Das Lateinische Neue Testament in Afrika zur Zeit Cyprians* (TUGAL 33; Leipzig 1909).

<sup>127</sup> Cyprian, *Ad Quirinum. Testimonium Libri tres*, III.119 (CCL 3/1,178-179; CSEL 3/1,183). Translation: "Grave was the yoke of the Law which has been given up by us and light is the yoke of the Lord which has been assumed by us" (translation mine).

<sup>128</sup> In all other manuscripts except X and V, the number of the psalm is identified as II, which is in accordance with both MT and LXX. The editor of CCL 3 preferred the erroneous reading of the number of this psalm probably on the grounds that as a *lectio difficilior* it seems to have been in the *Quir.*'s original.

<sup>129</sup> *Quir.* III.119 (CCL 3,178).

This biblical passage is quoted in order to validate the first part of the above mentioned formula, namely *Grave fuisse iugum legis*. The kings and the rulers of the nations perceive the yoke of God and his anointed as heavy and want to throw it off.

The next quotation comes from Matt. 11:28-29:

*Item in euangelio cata Mattheum: Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego uos requiescere faciam. Tollite iugum meum super uos et discite a me, quia mitis sum et humilis corde, et inuenietis requiem animabus uestris. Iugum enim meum bonum est et sarcina mea leuis est.*<sup>130</sup>

The words of Jesus from this Matthean passage are cited to prove the statement: *lege esse iugum Domini quod a nobis susceptum est*. As in the case of the above mentioned quotation from Ps 2, the word *iugum* is used as a connecting link, this time to show that the yoke of Christ as regards its difficulty is inversely proportional to the yoke of the Law.

Finally, the quotation from Acts 15:28-29 is introduced to validate the whole catechetical formula from *Test.* III.119. The citation of the apostolic decision to impose on Christians not the whole Law, but only what is necessary, indicates that Christ's yoke is lighter than the old yoke which proves the formula.<sup>131</sup>

Summarizing, the context of Cyprian's quotation of Acts 15:29 reveals that he considered the prohibitions to be light to observe, however, it does not disclose his understanding of the prohibitions.

Now, let us examine the words of the citation itself. Here is its Latin text:

(1) *Item in Actis apostolorum: Visum est sancto Spiritui et nobis nullam uobis inponere* (2) *sarcinam, quam istam quae ex necessitate, sunt abstinere uos ab*

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<sup>130</sup> *Quir.* III.119 (CCL 3,178).

<sup>131</sup> Cf. M.A. Fahey, *Cyprian and the Bible: A Study in Third-Century Exegesis* (BGBH 9; Tübingen 1971) 417.

*idolatriis* (3) *et sanguine et fornicatione. Et quaecumque uobis fieri non uultis, alii ne feceritis.*<sup>132</sup>

The Western-type identity of this text is proved by the absence of *suffocatis* and the presence of the negative form of the Golden Rule. As regards the first prohibition, it is denoted by an expression *ab idolatriis*. This reading, found in the body of the text in the latest critical edition of R. Weber (CCL 3) differs from a variant *ab idololatriis*, preferred by G. Hartel in the older critical edition of the Latin text (CSEL 3). While it is not easy to decide which reading transmits the original text, Hartel's preference for *ab idololatriis* seems to be slightly more plausible on the following ground: The Latin form *idololatria*, being in Cyprian's time probably still a relatively recent loanword from Greek, is phonetically closer to the original Greek form [εἰδωλολατρία](#). Only with the passage of time was it contracted to *idolatria* (haplology). It seems more likely for an archaic form to be changed in the medieval manuscripts to the more recent one than vice versa.

Cyprian uses the word denoting idolatry in the plural, probably in order to underline the necessity of abstaining from all kinds of idol worship, like the ones he enumerates in *De lapsis* 2<sup>133</sup>: offering sacrifices, eating sacrifices, wearing the veil and wreath associated with a pagan cult. As far as consumption of sacrificial food is concerned, we also find in the same treatise a story helpful with a clarification of Cyprian's position in this matter:

<sup>132</sup> *Quir.* III.119 (CCL 3,178-179). Textual notes: (1) *Item om. X V D Q M B E; in actis : in actibus V' b' O F h, in actus T; sancto Spiritui et nobis : spiritu sancto et nobis F, ut nobis spiritus sancti E, et nobis spiritus sancti E<sup>2</sup>; et om. D<sup>2</sup>; nobis om. O\**; nullam : nullum F; (2) *istam : ista V R D T<sup>2</sup> h, illa B; ex necessitate : ex in necessitate X, necessitatis E; sunt : est b' O<sup>2</sup>, sit F, om. E; abstinere : ut abstinence W; ab idolatriis : ab idololatriis P b' h, ab idolatriis L N V, ab idololatriis Q M<sup>2</sup>, ab idolatria M\* T U F, a simulacris E; (3) et sanguine : sed sanguine T\* U, sanguinis effusione Q M; fornicatione : fornicationem E; suffocatione F; quaecumque : quodcumque E; uobis : uos T\*; alii : alio B; aliis X V' b' Q M F; ne : nec F, om. W\**. According to R. Weber, L P N X are the best witnesses of *Quir.*'s text. More about the manuscripts in: R. Weber, CCL 3, LV-LIX. Translation: "Moreover, from the Acts of the Apostles: 'It has been decided by the Holy Spirit and us not to put on you any load, apart from what is out of necessity, [namely] that you abstain from idolatries and blood, and fornication. And whatever you do not want to be done to you, do not do it to others'" (translation mine).

<sup>133</sup> Cyprian, *De lapsis* 2 (CCL 3,221-222; SC 547,122-129; CSEL 3/1,238).



*Praesente ac teste me ipso accipite quid euenerit. Parentes forte fugientes dum trepidi minus consulunt, sub nutricis alimento paruulam filiam reliquerunt. Relictam nutrix detulit ad magistratus. Illi ei aput idolum quo populus confluebat, quod carnem necdum posset edere per aetatem, panem mero mixtum, quod tamen et ipsum de immolatione pereuntium supererat, tradiderunt. Recepit filiam postmodum mater. Sed facinus puella commissum tam loqui et indicare non potuit quam nec intellegere prius potuit ne arcere. Ignoracione igitur obreptum est ut sacrificantibus nobis eam secum mater inferret. Sed enim puella mixta cum sanctis precis nostrae et orationis impatiens, nunc ploratu concuti, nunc mentis aestu fluctuabunda iactari, uelut tortore cogente quibus poterat indiciiis conscientiam facti in simplicibus adhuc annis rudis anima fatebatur. Vbi uero sollemnibus adimpletis calicem diaconus offerre praesentibus coepit, et accipientibus ceteris locus eius aduenit, faciem suam paruula instinctu diuinae maiestatis auertere, os labiis obdurantibus premere, calicem recusare. Perstitit tamen diaconus et reluctanti licet de sacramento calicis infudit. Tunc sequitur singultus et uomitus: in corpore adque ore uiolato eucaristia permanere non potuit, sanctificatus in Domini sanguine potus de pollutis uisceribus erupit. Tanta est potestas Domini, tanta maiestas; secreta tenebrarum sub eius luce detecta sunt, sacerdotem Dei nec occulta crimina fefellerunt.<sup>134</sup>*

K. Six states in his comment on the above story that Cyprian abhors consumption of food offered to idols even when it was done unconsciously.<sup>135</sup> Still, it is clear that the bishop of Carthage did not mean to condemn the little

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<sup>134</sup> Cyprian, *De lapsis* 25 (CCL 3,234-235; SC 547,190.192; CSEL 3/1,255). Translation: "Listen to what happened in my presence, before my very eyes. There was a baby girl, whose parents had fled and had, in their fear, rather improvidently left it in the charge of its nurse. The nurse took the helpless child to the magistrates. There, before the idol where the crowds were flocking, as it was too young to eat the flesh, they gave it some bread dipped in what was left of the wine offered by those who had already doomed themselves. Later, the mother recovered her child. But the girl could not reveal or tell the wicked thing that had been done, any more that she had been able to understand or ward it off before. Thus, when the mother brought her in with her while we were offering the Sacrifice, it was through ignorance that this mischance occurred. But the infant, in the midst of the faithful, resenting the prayer and the offering we were making, began to cry convulsively, struggling and tossing in a veritable brain-storm, and for all its tender age and simplicity of soul, was confessing, as if under torture, in every way it could, its consciousness of the misdeed. Moreover, when the sacred rites were completed and the deacon began ministering to those present, when its turn came to receive, it turned its little head away as if sensing the divine presence, it closed its mouth, held its lips tight, and refused to drink from the chalice. The deacon persisted, and, in spite of its opposition, poured in some of the consecrated chalice. There followed choking and vomiting. The Eucharist could not remain in a body or a mouth that was defiled; the drink which was which had been sanctified by Our Lord's blood returned from the polluted stomach. So great is the power of the Lord, so sacred His majesty; under His light the hidden corners of darkness were laid bare, even secret crimes did not escape the priest of God": Transl. M. Bévenot, ACW 25,32-33.

<sup>135</sup> Six, *Aposteldekret*, 135.

girl who was too small to be aware of *idolothyta*'s prohibition.<sup>136</sup> Nevertheless, he uses this child's story to convey the message about serious sinfulness of the consumption of food offered to idols as a form of idolatry. It is noteworthy, however, that the child consumed the offerings "in the presence of an idol" (*apud idolum*). Cyprian identified as idol worship only such consumption of *idolothyta* which took place in the pagan worship area. We do not know if he had the same attitude to purchasing food of sacrificial provenance and eating it as a part of a regular daily diet in the surrounding void of any cultic symbols and activities.

The second prohibition appears in *Test.* in two textual variants:

- A) [*a*]...*sanguine* ("[from]...blood"): this reading is supported by the majority of important manuscripts and is preferred by both Weber and Hartel;
- B) [*a*]...*sanguinis effusione* ("[from]...shedding blood") found in *Q M*.

Analysing the variants, it has to be noted that, on the one hand, if we take *sanguinis effusione* as an interpretative correction, the former reading would be original. On the other hand, the substitution of *sanguinis effusione* by *sanguine* can also be plausibly explained as an attempt to harmonize the scriptural quotation with exact words from the Western text of Acts 15:29 (the word *effusione* does not occur in this verse in any known ancient Greek or Latin version of Acts). Nevertheless, Weber's and Hartel's choice seems to be better grounded because it is supported by older and more important manuscripts.

Choosing *sanguine* as being more likely original generates the difficulty in answering the question of Cyprian's understanding of this prohibition. Were the second variant given preference, the interpretation of abstaining from blood as shunning bloodshed would be obvious.

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<sup>136</sup> Note the words from text: "But the girl could not reveal or tell the wicked thing that had been done, any more that she had been able to understand or ward it off before": Transl. M. Bévenot, ACW 25,33.

Nevertheless, even with the first variant reading, this interpretation, although not certain, seems to be more plausible due to the following factors:

A) The absence of a clearly dietary prohibition (abstaining from strangled animals) and the presence of a prohibition of non-ethical behaviour (the negative form of the Golden Rule) suggest an interpretation linked with ethical behaviour rather than with a purely dietary rule.

B) The context in which the quotation is placed (see the above mentioned formula about the yoke of the Law and the yoke of the Lord) appears to prefer an interpretation that would highlight the easiness of bearing the yoke of the Lord. It is easier for an ordinary person to abstain from murder which is abhorrent to such a person anyway than to refrain from eating products containing animal blood, a thing far from being repugnant to the Roman culture.

As to the third prohibition, *fornicatio*, we do not find in Cyprian's treatises any specific and precise meaning given to this word. It can be assumed that Cyprian understood this prohibition as abstaining from sexual immorality, but it is not clear if his interpretation of this prohibition was more broad (all kinds of sexual immorality) or more strict (a specific type of sexual immorality). Similarly, nowhere in his writings does Cyprian comment on the Golden Rule, but its meaning is in principle very clear and can be expressed in the following positive way: Being good to oneself, one should likewise be good to others.

#### Summary:

- A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 with no commentary on the prohibitions.
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 4.
- D) Cyprian's understanding of the prohibitions:

- a) *Abstinere ab idolatriis*: Probably shunning all kinds of idol worship.
- b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Probably shunning murder.
- c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Shunning sexual immorality. It is not clear if Cyprian understood this prohibition as relating to sexual immorality in general or to some type of it.
- d) *Quaecumque uobis fieri non uultis, alii ne feceritis*: Shunning doing to others what one does not like to be done to himself/herself.

#### 4. Pacian of Barcelona

Following the chronological order, we find two 4<sup>th</sup>-century writers who explicitly referred to the Western version of the prohibitions from Acts 15: Pacian and Ephrem. Pacian's lifespan extends from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. or the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent. to the time between 379 and 393.<sup>137</sup> Most probably he was not raised as a Christian, but became a convert to Christianity and subsequently was elected as a bishop of Barcelona.<sup>138</sup> Jerome mentions him in his work *De viris illustribus*: He lauds Pacian for his eloquence and his exemplary life.<sup>139</sup>

Among literary works written by Pacian, five are extant in our times. One of these works, *Sermo de paenitentibus*, is of particular importance for our current research: not only do we find in it the quotation of the Apostolic Decree, but also Pacian's substantial commentary on this fragment of the New Testament. Here is Pacian's quotation of Acts 15:28-29:

*Visum est enim Sancto Spiritui et nobis nullum amplius inponi uobis pondus praeterquam haec: Necesse est ut abstineatis uos ab idolothytis et sanguine et fornicatione, a quibus observantes, bene agetis. Valet.*<sup>140</sup>

<sup>137</sup> C. Granado, SC 410,25-26.

<sup>138</sup> C. Granado, SC 410,27.

<sup>139</sup> Jerome, *De viris illustribus* 106 (PL 23,741-742).

<sup>140</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,2 (SC 410,124). Translation: "For it was decided by the Holy Spirit and us to impose on you no larger weight than this: It is necessary that you

This citation, containing no prohibition of eating strangled animals, clearly comes from a Western type of Acts 15:28-29. At the same time, however, it is notably different from the aforementioned quotations in the works of Irenaeus, Tertullian and Cyprian because it does not contain any extensions in its text, neither the Golden Rule nor any other additional words.

Having presented the scriptural quotation, Pacian explains how he understands the prohibitions. In point 3 he writes:

*Reliqua peccata meliorum operum compensatione curantur; haec uero tria crimina ut basilisci aliquius afflatus, ut ueneni calix, ut letalis arundo metuenda sunt; non enim uitiare animam, sed intercipere nouerunt.*<sup>141</sup>

We see that for Pacian the three prohibitions stand for three most serious sins Christians must avoid. The bishop of Barcelona emphasizes their gravity by naming them *crimina* (crimes). In his opinion, the difference between these three crimes and other sins consists in the way they can be atoned for. The damage caused by those other sins can be repaired by good deeds, which are opposite to them, for example parsimony (*tenacitas*) can be compensated for with philanthropy (*humanitas*), verbal abuse (*conuicium*) with apology (*satisfactio*), harshness (*tristitia*) with pleasantness (*iucunditas*), fierceness (*asperitas*) with gentleness (*lenitas*), frivolity (*leuitas*) with dignity

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abstain from sacrifices to idols and blood and sexual immorality; observing these [rulings], you will do what is good. Farewell" (translation mine). As regards the textual criticism of the extant works of Pacian, it has to be noted that only one independent manuscript is at researchers' disposal: *Reginensis Latinus* 331 (*R*) from the 9<sup>th</sup> cent. All other available manuscripts are directly or indirectly dependent on it (Cf. C. Granado, SC 410,99-101.116). The passage above contains two conjectures with respect to *R* and the text proceeding from it: the first one concerning spelling (*idolothytis* instead of *idolotitis*, *idolotyitis* or *ydolotitis*), the second one concerning grammar (*agetis* instead of *agentis*): Cf. A. Anglada Anfruns, CCL 69B,15.

<sup>141</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,2 (SC 410,124). Translation: "Other sins are remedied by the compensation of better works. But these three crimes are to be dreaded like the breath of some kind of basilisk, like a cup of poison, like a deadly arrow. For they do not know how merely to injure the soul, but also to snatch it away": Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,74-75.

(*grauitas*), perversity (*peruersitas*) with integrity (*honestas*).<sup>142</sup> But as far as the three crimes are concerned, this way of compensation is not possible, because, according to Pacian, there is no contrary act which would be able to reverse the damage caused by them. The bishop of Barcelona expresses this in the following way:

*Quid uero faciet contemptor Dei? Quid aget sanguinarius? Quod remedium capiet fornicator? Numquid aut placare Dominum desertor ipsius poterit, aut conseruare sanguinem suum qui fudit alienum, aut redintegrare Dei templum qui illud fornicando uiolauit. Ista sunt capitalia, fratres, ista mortalia.*<sup>143</sup>

This fragment, however, not only presents Pacian's attempt to show the seriousness of the three crimes, but also reveals much more information about the way he understood them. In light of this text, it is reasonable to conclude that *idolothyta* were for Pacian an exemplification of all kinds of idolatry and *fornicatio* an exemplification of all kinds of sexual immorality (cf. 1 Cor 6:18-19 evoked by Pacian's words about the temple of God). As to the abstaining from blood, Pacian clearly identifies it with the prohibition of shedding human blood.

In the last sentence of the above mentioned citation, Pacian calls these three grave sins *capitalia* (capital sins) and *mortalia* (mortal sins). The term *mortalia* as well as the distinction among sins as regards their gravity seem to be taken by Pacian from 1 J 5:16, the verse he quotes in 4.5:

*Si quis scit, inquit, fratrem suum peccare peccatum non usque ad mortem, petat pro eo, et dabit illi uitam Dominus; si quis deliquit peccatum non ad mortem: est autem peccatum quod ad mortem ducit, non pro eo dico ut deprecetur.*<sup>144</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,3 (SC 410,124). Translation: C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,75.

<sup>143</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,4 (SC 410,124.126). Translation: "But what shall he who was contemptuous of God do? What shall the blood-stained individual do? What remedy shall the fornicator have? Shall he who has abandoned the Lord be able to appease him? Or he who has shed another's blood be able to preserve his own? Or he who has violated God's temple by fornication be able to restore it? These, my brethren, are capital sins; these are mortal sins": Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,75.

<sup>144</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,5 (SC 410,126). Translation: "If anyone knows, he says, that his brother commits a sin which does not lead to death, let him entreat about this

In order to corroborate the statement that the three aforementioned crimes are the sins leading to death, Pacian cites some biblical texts which in his opinion prove this point.

*Moysen pro blasphematore populo deprecantem sic appellat Deus: "Si quis", inquit, "deliquerit ante me, deleam illum de libro meo". Et de homicida Dominus hoc iudicat: "Si quis", inquit, "gladio occiderit, gladio morietur". Et de fornicatore apostolus dicit: "Ne uiolaueritis", inquit, "templum Dei quod estis uos; qui autem templum Dei uiolauerit, disperdet illum Deus".<sup>145</sup>*

The first scriptural citation is taken from Ex 32:33. It contains God's reply to Moses after Moses was asking God to forgive Israelites for having constructed and worshipped the golden calf. Moses finishes his petition with the words: "If you do not [forgive them], then remove me from the book you have written" (Ex 32:32). God's reply begins with a direct reference to these words and carries the message that God will not remove Moses' name because only the names of those who sinned against God will be erased. Pacian quotes these words to prove that idolatry leads to removal of one's name from God's book which is a synonym of death.

The second biblical quotation consists of the words of Jesus directed to one of his disciples who, trying to defend Jesus, cut off an ear of a high priest's servant (Matt 26:52).<sup>146</sup> Pacian, probably quoting from memory,

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*and the Lord shall give him life, if he has not committed a sin which leads to death. Indeed, there is a sin that leads to death; I do not say that you should pray about that":* Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,75.

<sup>145</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 5,1 (SC 410,126). Translation: "God addresses Moses in the following manner when that man is praying for the people who had blasphemed, *Whoever has sinned against me*, he says, *I will delete him from my book*. And concerning the murderer, the Lord judges thus: *Whoever kills with the sword*, he says, *shall die by the sword*. And about the fornicator, the Apostle says, *Do not defile the temple of God, which temple you are; but he who defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy him*": Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,75.

<sup>146</sup> Some authors (Peyrot, L. Rubio, A. Anglada) find the source of this citation in Ex 21:12 ("Whoever strikes a man and he dies, should be put to death"), nevertheless, lexical similarities (e.g., a sword) between Pacian's quotation and Matt 26:52 makes the latter more plausible as the source. Cf. C. Granado, SC 410,282.

changes the original expression πάντες γὰρ οἱ λαβόντες μάχαιραν (“All those drawing the sword”) into *si quis gladio occiderit* (“if someone kills by a sword”). But it may also be an intentional change because the word denoting killing sounds more emphatic than drawing the sword, thus articulating clearly what the second crime is and afterwards what its result will be: death.

The third quotation constitutes a peculiar case for the following reasons: Its first part (*Ne uiolaueritis templum Dei quod estis uos*) is not actually a quotation at all: It is rather a creative paraphrase of the biblical message based on the conflation of 1 Cor 3:16 and 1 Cor 6:18. Its second part (*qui autem templum Dei uiolauerit, disperdet illum Deus*), which comes from 1 Cor 3:17, is not associated in its original context with fornication, but with pride and divisions in the Christian community in Corinth. It is 1 Cor 6:18-19 where Paul combines the statement about the body of a Christian being the temple of the Holy Spirit and exhortation to shun fornication. Again it seems that Pacian was quoting the Scripture from memory and this resulted in a very liberal rendering of the biblical words as well as in associating God’s punishment from 1 Cor 3:17 with the sin of sexual immorality. Nevertheless, taking into account the fact that in this verse God’s destruction, a synonym of death, is a punishment for destroying God’s temple and sexual immorality pollutes and desecrates the temple of God in a body of a Christian, we can conclude that fornication is a sin leading to death.

Pacian, in order to underline the irrevocable character of God’s ordinances concerning the three aforementioned crimes, provides one more scriptural quotation, namely Jesus’ statement from Matt 5:18:

*Caelum et terra transibunt, iota unum, inquit, aut apex non poterunt transire, priusquam omnia compleantur.*<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 5,2 (SC 410,126). Translation: “Heaven and earth shall pass away, he says, one iota or one stroke of a letter cannot pass away before all is fulfilled”: Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,76.



But this verse from the New Testament does not conclude Pacian's explanation of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. In the words following this quotation, the bishop of Barcelona provides us with additional information about his understanding of the proscriptions from Acts 15:29. He writes:

*Multi etiam animo in haec peccata ceciderunt, multi sanguinis rei, multi idolis mancipati, multi adulteri. Addo etiam non solas manus in homicidio plecti, sed et omne consilium quod alterius animam inpegit in mortem; nec eos tantum qui tura mensis adoleuere profanis sed omnem dissipauerint,<sup>148</sup> sed omnem prorsus libidinem pleasure extra uxorum torum chain et complexus embrace licitos euagantem reatu mortis adstringi.<sup>149</sup>*

We learn from this fragment that according to Pacian any of the three crimes can be committed not only by deeds, but also in thoughts. Thus, one can be guilty of such a crime even if he committed it only by his internal decision which has not (yet) been expressed by an external act.

To sum up, according to Pacian's interpretation, the prohibitions from Acts 15:29 proscribe three sorts of sin, both in thought and deed: all kinds of idolatry, murder and everything directly linked to shedding human blood as well as sexual immorality in all its types.

Summary:

- A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 with a commentary on the prohibitions.
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western (without the Golden Rule).
- C) Number of prohibitions: 3.

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<sup>148</sup> The text is corrupted. For a detailed discussion of emendation proposals see: C. Granado, SC 410,283-285. In the most recent critical edition of the works of Pacian, A. Anglada Anfruns proposes the following conjecture: *sed ecclesiam dissipauerint*. A. Anglada Anfruns, CCL 69B,18.

<sup>149</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 5,2-3 (SC 410,126.128). Translation: "Many also have in their minds fallen into these sins. Many are guilty of blood; many, surrendered unto idols; many, adulterers. I say, moreover, that it is not hands alone that are involved in murder, but every design, too, which has driven the soul of another to death; and that not only those who have made burnt offerings of incense on profane altars but all who have desolated the Church": Transl. C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,75.

D) Pacian's understanding of the prohibitions:

- a) *Abstinere ab idolothytis*: Shunning all kinds of idolatry.
- b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Shunning murder and everything leading to it.
- c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Shunning all kinds of sexual immorality.

## 5. Ephrem of Edessa

Ephrem (c. 306-373), the second 4<sup>th</sup>-century author, who referred to the Western variant of the prohibitions in Acts 15, was a deacon and a very prolific Christian writer.<sup>150</sup> He left an immense legacy of his literary activity. Apart from the extant texts written in his native Syriac, we also find a large number of ancient translations of his works into Greek and Armenian.<sup>151</sup> The texts referring to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions are found in Ephrem's *Commentary on Acts of the Apostles* and in his *Commentary on 1 Timothy*. Both these works are extant only in Armenian translations.<sup>152</sup> The analysis

<sup>150</sup> More information about Ephrem can be found in: S.P. Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian* (Cistercian Studies; Kalamazoo<sup>2</sup> 1992).

<sup>151</sup> "According to the catalogue of M. Geerard the Greek works attributed to Ephrem are so numerous that even in the native Greek patristic tradition only the works of John Chrysostom exceeded them. The corpus of Armenian works that survive under the name of Ephrem the Syrian is nearly as substantial as this Greek corpus": Edward G. Mathews, Jr., "Introduction", *The Armenian Commentary on Genesis Attributed to Ephrem the Syrian* (transl. E.G. Mathews, Jr.) (CSCO 573: Scriptores Armeniaci 24; Lovanii 1998) XIX.

<sup>152</sup> The Armenian translation of Ephrem's *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* was made in the 5<sup>th</sup> century and was published by the Mechitarist Fathers in Vienna in 1921; the title of the publication is provided in transliterated Armenian and in English translation: N. Akinean (ed.), *Surb Ep'rem / Saint Ephrem. Meknut'iun Gorcoç Arak'eloç / Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* (K'nnakan Hratarakut'iun Matenagrut'ean ev T'argmanut'ean Nakhneaç Hayoç Hator B., Prak I. / Critical Editions of the Literature and Translations of the Ancient Armenians. Section II, Part 1; Vienna 1921): See: F.C. Conybeare (transl.), "The Commentary of Ephrem on Acts", *The Beginnings of Christianity. Part I: The Acts of the Apostles. Vol.III: The Text of Acts* (eds. F.J. Foakes Jackson – K. Lake – J. Hardy Ropes) (London 1926) 376. *Commentary on Pauline Epistles* was translated from Armenian into Latin from a manuscript copied in the year 999: Patres Mekitharistis, *S. Ephraem Syri commentarii in Epistolas D. Pauli. Nunc primum ex Armenio in Latinum sermonem a Patribus Mekitharistis translati* (Venetiis 1893) IX.

here is based upon the 19<sup>th</sup>-and-20<sup>th</sup>-century scholarly Latin translations of the Armenian versions.

The relevant text from the *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles* reads as follows:

*[quantum stat in potentia mea] confirmo verba Shmavonis<sup>153</sup> quod (persuasimus) non<sup>154</sup> cogere gentiles ad observationem legum, sed ista omnia fiant, caveant et observent sollicito mandato, abstinere a sacrificio idolis, a fornicatione, et a sanguine, id est, ne manducent super sanguinem. (...)*  
*Nam scrip(serant id sicut pri)us dictum est. Ideo (ut dicant quodcunque proficit) tibi, malum est socio tuo. (Illa vero...in admo)nitionem dederunt, quia (dicunt: De quibus custodientes vos, repl)eti eritis spiritu sanc(to)<sup>155</sup>*

The first part of this text (before the ellipsis) refers to the Western version of Acts 15:20 without the Golden Rule. The order of the prohibitions matches their order in the *Codex Bezae* of Acts. Although this passage does not contain a lengthy commentary, it provides two important pieces of information on the author's understanding of the prohibitions. The first one can be extracted from the wording of the first prohibition: *abstinere a sacrificio idolis* ("to abstain from what was sacrificed to the idols"). This formulation suggests that Ephrem understood this prohibition in a dietary sense, as referring to eating food offered to idols and not to idolatry in general. The other piece of information is contained in an explicit statement: *id est, ne manducent super sanguinem*. This short comment clearly shows that also the precept of abstaining from blood was understood by Ephrem in a dietary sense.

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<sup>153</sup> Shmavon denotes Simon the Cananean / Simon the Zealot, see: Conybeare, "Commentary", 387.

<sup>154</sup> As Conybeare explains, "[t]he word 'non' is necessary to the sense, but the negative is not found in the Armenian text as printed": *Id.*, "Commentary", 426, n.2.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, 426. Translation: "[As far as it is in my power], I confirm the words of Shmavon whom (we persuaded) not to urge Gentiles to observe the Law, but, in order that everything may come to pass, let them take heed and observe a special ruling that they should abstain from what was sacrificed to the idols, from fornication and from blood, i.e. that they do not eat blood. (...) So they wrot(e what) has been said (ear)lier. Therefore, (so that they say, whatever profits) you, it is bad for your neighbour (that really...) they gave (as an admo)nition because (they say: When you keep away from these things), you will be (fill)ed with the Ho(ly) Spirit" (translation mine).

The second part of the quotation contains a very generic reference to Acts 15:22-29. The three aforementioned prohibitions are not explicitly enumerated here, but mentioning the Holy Spirit (not mentioned in Eastern versions of Acts 15:29) is another indication of the closeness of the text used by Ephrem to the Western version of Acts.

The other Ephrem's text containing a reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions reads as follows:

*Et quia instructio hactenus saecularium erat, ab immolato prohibebant illos Apostoli et a fornicatione et ab esu sanguinis; noluerunt enim illis onus imponere, ut eos prius ad pietatem ex idolorum cultu adducerent.*<sup>156</sup>

The data contained in this text can be treated as a confirmation of what is learned from the quotation of Ephrem's *Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*: Ephrem uses a Western version of Acts 15 and he understands both the prohibition of blood and probably the first prohibition (*ab immolato* / "from a sacrificed animal") in a dietary sense.

In the above texts, no explanation can be found with regard to the prohibition of fornication. While the word itself denotes sexual immorality, it is not clear, if Ephrem understood this particular Apostolic Council's prohibition in a stricter or a broader sense.

Summary:

- A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20 (1x), Acts 15:20 or 15:29 (1x).
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 3.
- D) Ephrem's understanding of the prohibitions:

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<sup>156</sup> Patres Mekitharistis, *S. Ephraem Syri commentarii in Epistolas D. Pauli. Nunc primum ex Armenio in Latinum sermonem a Patribus Mekitharistis translati* (Venetiis 1893) 243. Translation: "And because the instruction so far pertained to worldly matters, the Apostles forbade them sacrificed food and fornication and blood consumption for they did not want to put on them any burden so that they may lead them first from idol worship to [true] piety" (translation mine).

- a) *Abstinere a sacrificio idolis / ab immolato*: No to consumption of food offered idols.
- b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: No to blood consumption.
- c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Shunning sexual immorality (not clear if this is understood in a stricter or a broader sense).

## 6. Augustine of Hippo

Augustine (354-430), one of the most prolific and influential Christian authors of all times,<sup>157</sup> is last in order of mention, but certainly not last in order of importance among the writers whose works need to be analysed in this chapter. His interpretation of the prohibitions from Acts 15:29 can be found in his work *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* (*Against Faustus the Manichaeon*). Faustus of Milev was one of the Manichaean leaders held in high esteem in North Africa.<sup>158</sup> Augustine, while he was a Manichaean, had some questions about the doctrine of this religious cult and hoped that Faustus would be able to answer them. The meeting with Faustus, however, resulted in great disappointment for Augustine who, having not received satisfactory replies to his inquiries, eventually abandoned Manichaeism.<sup>159</sup>

In the years 397-398<sup>160</sup> Augustine, after he became Catholic bishop of Hippo, looks back on that meeting and writes the polemic *Contra Faustum Manichaeum*. In the first chapter Augustine explains the aim of this writing and its basic structure: As regards the aim, Augustine has been asked by his fellow believers to write an answer to a volume written by Faustus which has

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<sup>157</sup> C. Kannengiesser, "Augustine of Hippo (354-430)", *Historical Handbook of Major Biblical Interpreters* (ed. D.K. McKim) (Downer Grove, IL – Leicester, England 1998) 22.

<sup>158</sup> H. Chadwick, *Augustine of Hippo. A Life* (Oxford 2009) 16.

<sup>159</sup> More about reasons why Augustine abandoned the Manichaean cult can be found in: E.K.L. Lee, *Augustine, Manichaeism and the Good* (PhD Diss., Ottawa 1996 – dissertation.com 1997) 10-12.

<sup>160</sup> P. Brown, *Augustine of Hippo. A Biography* (Berkeley 2000) 178.

been, in Augustine's words, directed *against the proper Christian faith and the Catholic truth*.<sup>161</sup> As to the structure, the writing is divided into 33 books, and in every book Augustine presents opinions of Faustus first and then his own answers and elucidations.

The prohibitions are explained in Book XXXII of *Against Faustus the Manichaeon*.<sup>162</sup> The leading theme of this penultimate book of the polemic concerns the attitude towards Sacred Scripture. Faustus admits that he accepts only some teachings of the New Testament, namely the ones which he finds to be pure and helpful for salvation. Nevertheless, he also claims that Catholics should not be surprised with such an approach because they do the same thing with respect to the Old Testament: some of its teachings they follow, some they do not. Faustus also provides some examples which in his opinion sustain his thesis: Catholics do not practice circumcision any more, they do not abstain from work on the Sabbath, they celebrate Passover and Pentecost but do not observe the Old Testament rules pertaining to these feasts.

Among these examples there is also one connected with food and thus particularly relevant to our topic here: According to Faustus, Catholics acknowledge that both food offered to idols and eating animals that died of themselves are unclean (which is in accordance with the teaching of the Old Testament), nevertheless, they are not eager to accept the prohibition of eating pork, hares, cuttlefish or other animals that according to Torah are also unclean. Faustus claims that he is aware of Augustine's explanation why many Old Testament practices are not observed by Christians any more; namely that they had to be observed by Jews until the coming of Jesus. When Jesus came, his followers were taught by him which Old Testament precepts they had to follow and which had been only temporary and were to

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<sup>161</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 1,1 (CSEL 25/1,251–797). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,264-592.

<sup>162</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32 (CSEL 25,760-784). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04, 571-584.

be observed no more. Faustus states that the Manichaeian approach to the New Testament bears resemblance to Augustine's own approach to the Old Testament: Namely, Manichaeians believe that the Paraclete who came to lead the followers of Jesus into the whole truth (whose coming had been foretold by Jesus), teaches Manichaeians which parts of the New Testament they should follow and which they should not.

In his reply, Augustine rejects the claims of analogy between his and Manichaeian's attitude to the Sacred Scripture. Augustine and his fellow believers accept the whole Old Testament as God's word, they by no means reject any part of it. The outward observance of some Old Testament precepts was an appropriate temporary arrangement for the people of the Old Dispensation. The people of the New Covenant are not bound to the outward observance of such precepts, they recognize, however, that these precepts still retain their spiritual value as symbols of truths revealed in the New Testament. Faustus, on the other hand, does not accept many parts of the New Testament as authoritative but treats them as spurious or false interpolations.

We find Augustine's opinion about abstaining from things sacrificed to idols<sup>163</sup> contained in the section where he is dealing with Faustus' accusation that Christians do not follow all Old Testament food regulations, but only two of them, namely, they do not eat food offered to idols (*immolatum*) and meat of an animal that died of itself (*morticinum*). Augustine admits that his fellow believers do abstain from these two categories of food.<sup>164</sup> As regards

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<sup>163</sup> Augustine renders the idea of food sacrificed to idols by terms *immolatum* or *immolatum*. These terms do not occur in Vulgate's New Testament.

<sup>164</sup> Interpreting these two Christian dietary practices, Augustine does not mention Apostolic Decree from Acts 15, maybe because eating an animal that died of itself (Latin: *morticinum*) was not prohibited by it. Prohibition of eating non-slaughtered animal's carcass can be found in Deut 14:21 (Cf. also Lev 22:8), Augustine, however, does not mention these Old Testament regulations stating simply that Christians do not consume this type of meat on the grounds of sanitary issues that would pertain to such consumption: Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,771). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04, 577.

food offered to idols, however, he states that “it is not expedient for a Christian” to eat it (“*non expediat inmolaticio [sic] uesci christiano*”)<sup>165</sup>. Why is it not expedient? The bishop of Hippo uses here the authority of the New Testament to prove his point. However, he does not cite the Apostolic Decree for this purpose, instead, he quotes 1 Cor 10:20: “But what the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to become sharers of demons”.<sup>166</sup> These words sound like an absolute prohibition when taken out of context: Christians must abstain from food offered to idols because, in fact, it was offered to demons. Still, reading them in light of the whole of chapter 10 and taking into account Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor 8, it becomes clear that Paul did not consider the food offered to idols as unclean or contaminated because of this act of offering. Instead, Paul encouraged Corinthians to eat any kind of meat from the marketplace or in the houses of unbelievers without investigating if it had been offered to idols or not. He told them, however, to abstain from such meat if eating it would scandalise those Christians who considered such consumption as idolatrous (having a meal together was a sign of fellowship and communion so eating food offered to demons might have been interpreted as a sign of being in communion with immaterial beings opposed to God).

Augustine is aware of the aforementioned context of 1 Cor 10:20 and, wishing to oppose the Manichaeian negative perception of material things, explains that there is nothing wrong with sacrifices as such – there were sacrifices offered to God in the times of the Old Testament and blood which was shed in those sacrifices was a type of Christ’s blood shed for salvation of the world. There is also nothing wrong with the nature of the sacrificial meat. The reason why Christians abstain from food offered to idols is “for

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<sup>165</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,771). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577.

<sup>166</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,771). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577.



conscience sake, not to seem to have fellowship with demons”.<sup>167</sup> Thus it seems that Augustine was concerned here about giving a good example so that people who identified eating food offered to idols with idol worship would not have a false impression of the Christian faith and religious practices. As we will see later, this text is by no means comprehensive with regard to the portrayal of Augustine’s attitude to abstaining from consumption of sacrifices which was in fact much stricter than the above text seems to suggest.

It is only after expounding the practice of abstaining from *immolatio* and *morticinum* that Augustine mentions the decisions of the Apostolic Decree:

*et in actibus apostolorum hoc legi praeceptum ab apostolis, ut abstinerent gentes tantum a fornicatione et ab immolatis et a sanguine.*<sup>168</sup>

Augustine enumerates only three, not four prohibitions. Therefore, as regards their number, he seems to be following the Western textual tradition of the Acts of the Apostles<sup>169</sup>. The order in which Augustine lists the prohibitions is particular to him and different from the order of the three prohibitions occurrences (Acts 15:20.29; 21:25) in all major textual witnesses of Acts: *fornicatio* is mentioned as the first thing to abstain from, after that *inmolata* (*immolata*), and finally *sanguis*.

<sup>167</sup> ...*propter conscientiam, ne daemonibus communicasse uideatur*: Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,771). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577.

<sup>168</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,772). Textual notes: b reads *lege* in place of *legi*; C reads *apostolos* in place of *apostolis*; b omits *ab* before *inmolatis*; Lb omits *a* before *sanguine*: Ibid., 772. Translation: “And in the Acts of the Apostles, this precept given by apostles is written: that the people abstain only from sexual immorality and from what was sacrificed and from blood” (translation mine).

<sup>169</sup> Not eating meat with blood is mentioned as an explanation of abstaining from blood, not as a separate prohibition. Further on in the text, Augustine mentions specifically strangled (animal’s) meat: *praefocatae carnes* {Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,772; Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577)}; nevertheless, it also seems to be an elucidation what abstaining from blood consists of.

Perhaps this fact has no special meaning: Augustine is just citing the prohibitions from memory in a random order. It is possible, however, that Augustine, by mentioning *fornicatio* first, wants to emphasize the importance of this prohibition. In any case, he does not explain here at all what, according to him, the Apostles might have meant by it. Probably he did not consider such expounding necessary: whatever this *fornicatio* was, it was certainly some sort of immoral sexual behaviour perhaps functioning as a generic term covering all kinds of such behaviour and sexual immorality in whichever form, must be abstained from anyway.

As far as sacrifices to idols are concerned, Augustine does not add anything more to the explanation he has already provided before referring explicitly to the Apostolic Council. It is the third prohibition, blood, upon which Augustine expands.

Before presenting his own position on abstaining from blood, Augustine informs his readers about two different opinions in this matter of which he was aware. The first opinion interprets abstaining from blood as avoiding eating the meat of an animal whose blood was not poured out.<sup>170</sup> Consequently, this prohibition is understood as a continuation of the observance given to Noah to remove blood from an animal before consumption of its meat. The second opinion takes the word “blood” as a metonymy of killing, thus explaining abstaining from blood as a prohibition of murder.

Having mentioned these two possibilities, Augustine does not explain which of them he supports and why. Surprisingly, he states that settling such a question would not only be too time-consuming, but also unnecessary. One may well ask: Why? The answer is: If the second opinion is correct, then abstaining from blood is not a dietary prescription but an ethical rule that is, moreover, not controversial and accepted by both Christians and

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<sup>170</sup> *ut abstinerent...a sanguine; id est, ne quicquam [quidquam] ederent carnis, cuius sanguis non esset effusus*: Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,772). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04, 577.

Manichaeans. Augustine finds it so self-evident that he does not even bother to comment on it. As regards the first opinion, he states that even though it had been required from Christians not to eat blood of animals and meat with such blood, it seems to have been done for some very specific reasons: The Apostles wanted to find an observance that was not burdensome to follow for all Christians, both those from the Gentiles and the Jews “for the sake of the Cornerstone, who makes both one in Himself”<sup>171</sup>; in other words: to express the unity they have in Christ. At the same time, abstaining from blood would make Christians think of Noah, to whom this command was first given, and of his ark which was a type of the Church of all nations, a prophecy whose fulfilment had already begun when Gentiles started to embrace the faith.

Having said that, Augustine states that for him and his fellow believers who live some centuries after the time of the Apostles, the situation looks quite different. There is no need to express the unity between Christians from the Gentiles and Christians from the Jews because no Jewish Christians are to be found any more.

*...at ubi ecclesia gentium talis effecta est, ut in ea nullus Israhelita carnalis adpareat [appareat], quis iam hoc christianus obseruat, ut turdos uel minutiores auiculas non adtingat [attingat], nisi quarum sanguis effusus est, aut leporem non edat, si manu a ceruice percussus, nullo cruento uulnere occisus est?*<sup>172</sup>

Thus, the reason for introducing the prohibition of blood consumption ceased to exist and, because of this fact, the prohibition became obsolete. However, this argument is not the only one Augustine provides us with in order to warrant his opinion. There are according to him two more reasons why abstaining from eating blood is not binding for Christians any more:

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<sup>171</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,772). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577. This expression echoes Eph 2:11-22.

<sup>172</sup> Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,772-773). Translation: “...as soon as the Church has become so Gentile that no Israelite according to the flesh could be found in it, what Christian would still not touch thrushes or smaller birds if their blood was not poured out or not eat a hare if it was struck by hand in the neck and not killed with a bleeding wound?” (translation mine).

Reason 1: Words of Jesus himself taken from Matt 15:11: “Not what comes into your mouth defiles you, but what comes out of it”<sup>173</sup>. It appears that Augustine understands these words in a sense that no food, not even blood, can defile someone who eats it. Consequently, since there is no intrinsic evil in eating blood, there is no need to abstain from it.

Reason 2: Common practice among Christians from Augustine’s community of eating small animals without draining their blood. This practice was based on the above mentioned saying of Jesus which was interpreted among North African Christians as a permission to eat all kinds of food. There might still have been few persons afraid of the consumption of small animals whose blood was not poured out, but such people, as Augustine put it, “are laughed at by the others, so much everyone in this matter accepts that true sentence: ‘Not what comes into your mouth defiles you, but what comes out of it’”.<sup>174</sup>

In his approach to the Jerusalem Council’s prohibitions presented to us in the polemic *Against Faustus the Manichaeon*, Augustine is not particularly interested in theoretical speculation about their meaning. His goal is to refute Faustus’ claims that Christians have a selective attitude with regard to the biblical prohibitions. For this reason, Augustine tries to explain why his contemporary fellow believers observe or do not observe a particular prohibition. He expounds the meaning of the prohibitions only to the degree necessary to know if their observance is still binding or not. That is why he mentions abstaining from *fornicatio* while enumerating the prohibitions and

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<sup>173</sup> [N]on quod intrat in os uestrum, uos coinquinat, sed quod exit: A quotation of Matt 15:11: Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,773). Translation: R. Stothert, NPNF 1-04,577.

<sup>174</sup> My translation of: *a ceteris inridentur. ita omnium animos in hac re tenuit illa sententia ueritatis: non quod intrat in os uestrum, uos coinquinat, sed quod exit*. Augustine of Hippo, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13 (CSEL 25/1,773).

he even seems to emphasize its importance by putting it on the top of the list, but he does not make any comment about its meaning. It was clear to him that any kind of sexual immorality must not be practiced so he probably saw little point in trying to guess exactly what sort of immoral behaviour the Apostles meant by using such broad term as *fornicatio*.

The prohibition of blood consumption, on the other hand, is a prohibition no longer in force. Augustine sees proof of its temporary value in the specific reason for which, as he thinks, the prohibition was introduced in times of the Apostles. Since this reason does not exist in Augustine's time and place, the prohibition loses its binding force. More importantly, however, Augustine finds proof of the temporary value of this prohibition in the words from the Gospel itself that nothing that enters a person's mouth makes that person unclean (cf. Matt 15:11), finding also additional confirmation of this proof in the widely spread practice of eating meat with blood in the North African Christian community.

*Against Faustus the Manichean* is not the only text in which Augustine explicitly refers to the prohibitions from Acts. The next reference to them, this time to Acts 21:25, comes from his Letter 82. This letter was written in 405 to Jerome as a reply to his three letters (catalogued as 72, 75 and 81). The quotation reads as follows:

*De gentibus autem qui crediderunt nos mandauimus, iudicantes nihil eiusmodi seruare illos, nisi ut obseruent ab idolis immolato et a sanguine et a fornicatione.*<sup>175</sup>

The text of Acts in this quotation is unique: it shares the main characteristics of the Western text (omission of *suffocatum*), it is, nevertheless, quite different from the Latin text of *Codex Bezae*.<sup>176</sup> This

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<sup>175</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 82.9 (CCL 31A,102; CSEL 34,359). Translation: "But as touching the gentiles that believe, we have given orders, judging that they are to keep nothing of that sort, except that they refrain from that which has been offered to idols, and from blood and from fornication": Transl. W. Parsons, FC.NT 12,396.

<sup>176</sup> The Latin text of Acts 21:25 in *Codex Bezae* reads as follows: *de illis uero qui crediderunt gentibus nihil habent quod dicere in te nos enim scripsimus iudicantes nihil tale obseruare*

citation occurs in the context of Augustine's reply to Jerome with regard to the proper understanding of Gal 2. The quotation from Acts and its interpretation serve as an argument in this discussion, nonetheless, Augustine makes no comment about his understanding of the prohibitions enumerated above.

The third work of Augustine where we can find a reference to the texts of we are discussing is entitled *Speculum* and belongs to his late works (written 427). It contains a quotation of all three verses from Acts which enumerate the Apostolic Council's prohibitions as well as a short commentary. These three quotations from Acts, namely 15:19-20; 15:28-29; 21:25, read as follows:

*Iacobus ergo loquens: propter quod ego iudico non inquietari eos qui ex gentibus convertuntur ad Deum sed scribere ad eos ut abstineant se a contaminationibus simulacrorum et fornicatione et suffocatis et sanguine (...)*

*visum est enim Spiritui Sancto et nobis nihil ultra inponere vobis oneris quam haec necessario ut abstinere vos ab immolatis simulacrorum et sanguine suffocato et fornicatione a quibus custodientes vos bene agetis valete.*

*(...) de his autem qui crediderunt ex gentibus nos scripsimus iudicantes ut abstineant se ab idolis immolato et sanguine et suffocato et fornicatione.*<sup>177</sup>

All of these quotations have been taken from the *Vulgate* (the same wording) and, unlike the previous quotations, they all enumerate 4

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*eos nisi custodirent se a sacrificio et sanguine et fornicatione: Codex Bezae, folio 506r, University of Cambridge Digital Library, <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-NN-00002-00041/842> (accessed on 2.02.2016).*

<sup>177</sup> Augustine, *Speculum* 29 (CSEL 12,198.199). Translation: "Therefore, James said: For this reason I think that those from the Gentiles who convert to God should not be disturbed but they should be written to abstain from the pollution of idols, from fornication, from what was strangled and from blood (...) For the Holy Spirit and we have decided to not impose on you any exceeding burden, but only what is necessary: That you may abstain from sacrifices offered to idols, from blood, from what was strangled and from fornication. You will do well when you keep away from those. Farewell. (...) But concerning those from the Gentiles who have believed, we wrote them our decision that they should abstain from what was sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what was strangled and from fornication" (translation is mine).

prohibitions (including *suffocatis / suffocato*). The quotation from Acts 21:25 is followed by an important commentary:

(...) *ubi uidemus apostolos eis qui ex gentibus crediderunt nulla voluisse onera ueteris legis inponere, quantum attinet ad corporalis abstinentiam uoluptatis, nisi ut obseruarent ab his tribus, id est ab eis quae idolis immolarentur et a sanguine et a fornicatione. unde nonnulli putant tria tantum crimina esse mortifera, idolatriam et homicidium et fornicationem, ubi utique et adulterium et omnis praeter uxorem concubitus intellegitur. quasi non sint mortifera crimina quaecumque alia sunt praeter haec tria quae a regno dei separant, aut inaniter et fallaciter dictum sit.*<sup>178</sup>  
*“Neque fures, neque auari, neque ebriosi, neque maledici, neque rapaces regnum dei possidebunt.”*<sup>179</sup>

First of all, it is noteworthy that in this commentary Augustine, while enumerating once again the Apostolic Council's prohibitions, does not mention abstaining from what was strangled nor makes any comment about it. This inconsistency as well as the fact that Augustine's previous quotations of the prohibition verses from Acts never contained the term *suffocatum* give us a justified reason to suppose that the prohibition quotations from *Spec* are not originally Augustine's, but were inserted later by a copyist. This is further supported by the fact that the quotations in question come from the Vulgate whose New Testament part, with the exception of the Gospels, was never cited by Augustine in his other writings.<sup>180</sup>

<sup>178</sup> The quotation that follows comes from 1 Cor 6:10. According to Sabatier's edition, the Latin wording of this quotation is identical both in Vg and in the main *Vetus Latina* version: *Biblorum Sacrorum Latinae versione antiquae seu Vetus Italica, et caeterae quaecumque in Codicibus Mss et antiquorum libris reperiri potuerunt quae cum Vulgata Latina, et cum Texto Greco comparantur III* (ed. P. Sabatier) (Paris 1751) 674.

<sup>179</sup> Augustine, *Speculum* 29 (CSEL 12,199-200). Translation: "In [these verses] we see that the apostles did not want to lay on the ones from the Gentiles who believed any burden of the old law pertaining to the mortification of bodily pleasures, with the exception of these three things: food offered to idols, blood and fornication. Hence some people think that only these three offences are mortal: idolatry, murder and fornication by which both adultery and sexual relations with someone other than one's wife are meant. [Some persons think so] as if, except these three things, any other offences which exclude from the kingdom of God were not mortal or as if the following statement was futile and erroneous: 'Neither thieves nor greedy nor drunkards nor revilers nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God'" (translation mine).

<sup>180</sup> A. Vaccari, "Les traces de la *Vetus Latina* dans le *Speculum* de Sainte Augustin", *Studia Patristica* 4/2 (Berlin 1961) 228-233; H.A.G. Houghton, "The Use of the Latin Fathers for

Next, we find some interesting comments of Augustine about the meaning of the prohibitions. Augustine criticizes these individuals who claim that idolatry, murder and sexual immorality, as they interpret the prohibitions, are the only mortal sins. In Augustine's view, the quotation from 1 Cor 6:10 where more sins excluding from the kingdom of God are listed, clearly proves them wrong. It seems, however, that Augustine is not against their very interpretation of the meaning of the prohibitions and accepts it at least as a viable option. Particularly noteworthy is his broad understanding of *fornicatio* here: It denotes both acts of adultery and sexual relations of non-married persons.

Apart from texts containing Augustine's explicit references to Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, we find in his other works some comments which are thematically linked with the first prohibition and are very important for the proper understanding of Augustine's view on eating food offered to idols.

The first of these texts occurs in the Letter 47 which was written in 398 to Publicola. In point 4 of this letter, Augustine explains to his addressee that the apostolic teaching concerning food sacrificed to idols must be obeyed. Therefore, he encourages Publicola to study the writings of Paul on this matter and declares his willingness to help him in understanding them. In his explanation, Augustine, quoting Ps 24:1 or 1 Cor 10:26 as well as 1 Tim 4:4, acknowledges that everything God created is good in its nature. Consequently, according to Augustine, there is nothing wrong in breathing air which absorbed the smoke of the sacrifices or eating regular food, for example, in a city dedicated to a pagan deity. In spite of this, however, Augustine maintains that there are special rules as regards food offered to idols. Of course, if someone, being unaware of it, ate foods of pagan sacrificial provenance, he would suffer no spiritual harm. Still, if someone

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New Testament Textual Criticism", *The Text of the New Testament in Contemporary Research: Essays on the Status Quaestionis* (eds. B.D. Ehrman – M.W. Holmes) (Leiden – Boston<sup>2</sup> 2013) 383.



consumes it willingly, it is already a different matter: Augustine condemns such behaviour as sinful.<sup>181</sup>

In the same letter, we find another statement that makes us realize how strong was his conviction that wilful consumption of sacrificial food is morally wrong. He was asked about the following hypothetical case: If a Christian traveller found himself in a position of suffering extreme hunger and the only food available to him was meat in an idol's temple without anybody around to help him, should this person eat the meat or rather die of starvation? Augustine's answer reads as follows:

*In qua quaestione quoniam non est consequens, ut cibus ille idolothyum sit, potuit enim uel ab eis, qui ibi ab itinere deuertentes corpus refecerant, obliuione seu uoluntate dimitti uel illic ob aliam causam quamlibet poni, breuiter respondeo. Aut certum est esse idolothyum aut certum est non esse aut ignoratur. Si ergo certum est esse, melius Christiana uirtute respuitur; si autem uel non esse scitur uel ignoratur, sine ullo conscientiae scrupulo in usum necessitatis assumitur.*<sup>182</sup>

Augustine's response might seem shocking, still it simply shows that his belief in goodness of all food did not exclude his radical conviction about unacceptability of the wilful consumption of food offered to idols.

Such a stand of the Bishop of Hippo is further confirmed in another work of his dedicated to the question of marriage. This work, *De bono coniugali*, was written by him in the year 401, and this is what we find in it:

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<sup>181</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 47.4 (CCL 31,206-207; CSEL 34/2,134). Translation: W. Parsons, FC.NT 12,298-230.

<sup>182</sup> Augustine, *Ep.* 47.6 (CCL 31,207; CSEL 34/2,136). Translation: "In this question, since it is not logically required that the food should belong to the idol, inasmuch as it could have been left there by accident or design, or for some other reason, by travelers who had turned aside from the road at that point to refresh themselves, I shall answer briefly. Either it is certain that the food belonged to the idol, or it is certain that it did not, or it is not known whether it did or not. If it is certain, it is better to refuse it with Christian fortitude; if it is known not to be idolatrous or if there is doubt, it may be used in this extremity without any scruple of conscience": Transl. W. Parsons, FC.NT 12,231.

*sicut ergo satius est emori fame quam idolothyitis uesci; ita satius est defungi sine liberis quam ex illicito coitu stirpem quaerere.*<sup>183</sup>

Taking all these texts into account, it appears that Augustine's uncompromised stand concerning wilful consumption of sacrificial food reveals his strong conviction that this type of action is always an act of idolatry and as such must be shunned at all cost.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29 (1 quotation, 2 references); Acts 21:25 (2 quotations).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western and Eastern (Eastern version quotations are most probably not originally Augustine's).

C) Number of prohibitions: 3 in Augustine's original quotations / references; 4 in three quotations in *Speculum* (these quotations from the Vulgate are most likely not originally Augustine's).

D) Augustine's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) *Abstinere...ab immolates / Abstinere...ab idolis immolato / [ut abstineant se a contaminationibus simulacrorum] / [ut abstineatis vos ab immolatis simulacrorum] / [ut abstineant se ab idolis immolato]*: Abstaining from the wilful consumption of food offered to idols in particular. This type of consumption (if it is conscious and wilful) was regarded by Augustine as intrinsically idolatrous. If, however, it is not certain that food has been offered to idols, it may be eaten.

b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Possibly abstaining from homicide. Augustine also considered a dietary meaning of this prohibition (namely abstaining from meat of animals whose blood was not poured out). In this latter case, the

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<sup>183</sup> Augustine, *De bono coniugali* 18 (CSEL 41,211). Translation: "Accordingly, just as it is better to die of hunger than to eat food that has been sacrificed to idols, so too it is better to die without children than to look for descendants by an illicit union": Transl. R. Kearney, WSA 9/1,47.

prohibition had a temporary value and was not binding any more because the goal it was serving has already been achieved.

c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Abstaining from all illicit sexual relations.

## Chapter II. Authors referring to the Eastern text

In this chapter, an attempt will be made to extract information about the understanding of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions from the writings of 15 authors (or group of authors / redactors) who explicitly referred to Acts 15:20.29 and / or 21:25. Again, it is no surprise that probably all of these writers came from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire (including John Cassian who, although he lived and worked in Gaul, originally came from the East). Whereas some literary works containing the references in question are anonymous, the other ten were composed by authors from Alexandria, Olympus, Jerusalem, Asia Minor, Constantinople and Cyrus. Let us begin our analysis with Clement of Alexandria, a contemporary of Irenaeus, the analysis of whose writings opened the previous chapter.

### 1. Clement of Alexandria

Clement (ca. 140/150 – ca. 215),<sup>184</sup> a Christian teacher from Alexandria, who had the famous Origen as one of his students, is the first known writer who quoted the Eastern version of the prohibitions from Acts 15:29. This citation occurs twice in his writings: Once in the second book of Παιδαγωγός (*Paedagogus*) and once in the fourth book of Στρωματεῖς (*Miscellanies*). It remains uncertain which of these quotations was introduced earlier: for example, according to F. Havey, the first four books of *Miscellanies* were written before *Paedagogus* was,<sup>185</sup> A. Méhat, however, is

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<sup>184</sup> A. Méhat, *Étude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensia 7; Paris 1966) 54.

<sup>185</sup> F. Havey, "Clement of Alexandria", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 4 (New York 1908). <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04045a.htm> (accessed on 7.07.2015).

rather inclined to believe that the fourth book of *Miscellanies* was written after *Paedagogus*.<sup>186</sup>

Let us begin our analysis from the quotation used in *Paedagogus*. It occurs in the context of Clement's advice on proper behaviour at table and reads as follows:

οἱ δὲ αὐτοὶ οὗτοι ἀπόστολοι «τοῖς κατὰ τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν καὶ Συρίαν καὶ Κιλικίαν ἀδελφοῖς» ἐπιστέλλοντες «ἔδοξεν» ἔφασαν «τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιθέσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ τῆς πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε».<sup>187</sup>

The above passage contains a partial quotation of Acts 15:23 and an almost complete quotation of Acts 15:28-29. The text of these citations is very close to the text of Acts in *Codex Vaticanus* (B). Regrettably, Clement does not provide any explanation of this quotation. We cannot learn much from the context of this citation, either: Directly before its occurrence, Clement cites Acts 6:2, commenting on it briefly that the decision of the Apostles to stop serving tables personally in order to have time for proclaiming the Word of God, revealed also their practice of shunning gluttony<sup>188</sup> and directly after its occurrence, the Alexandrian teacher exhorts Christians to shun drunkenness. Thus, the quoted verses from Acts 15:28-29 stay in rather loose connection with the surrounding context with the theme of eating being the only thread which connects them to Clement's other statements in *Paed.* 2.7.56.

<sup>186</sup> A. Méhat, *Étude sur les 'Stromates' de Clément d'Alexandrie* (Patristica Sorbonensia 7; Paris 1966) 54. More about the problems concerning the chronology of the works of Clemens in: C. Mondésert, SC 30, 12-22.

<sup>187</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.7.56.2 (GCS 12,191; SC 108,114.116). Translation: "And the apostles themselves, writing to the brethren at Antioch, and in Syria and Cilicia, said: 'It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no other burden than these necessary things, to abstain from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which, if you keep yourselves, you shall do well': Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,253.

<sup>188</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.7.56.1 (GCS 12,191; SC 108,114-115).

There are, however, other passages in the same literary work which can be helpful in discovering Clement's understanding of the prohibitions. In *Paed.* 2.1.8.3 Clement reminds Christians that they have to abstain from meat sacrificed to idols. In his description of these sacrifices, he incorporates a citation from Homer's *Odyssey*.<sup>189</sup>

μιαρὰ δοκεῖ μοι καὶ βδελυρὰ ἐκεῖνα, ὧν ἐρίπτανται τοῖς αἵμασιν “ψυχὰὶ ὑπὲρ ἑρέβους νεκύων κατατεθνηώτων”.<sup>190</sup>

It is noteworthy that, according to the above mentioned statement, it is the blood of the sacrifices that entices the souls of the dead to come. This special function of blood was possibly a reason for treating all instances of its consumption as at least potential participation in a meal with demons which amounted to an act of idolatry. The next words of Clement consisting of a quotation from 1 Cor 10:20 seem to corroborate this view.

Next, in what follows, Clement clarifies his attitude to the question of eating meat offered to idols. He admits that Christians must abstain from them, but not out of fear because they do not contain any harmful power. Clement is convinced that the use of food is, in principle, morally indifferent (ἀδιάφορος) quoting Matt 15:11 and 1 Cor 8:8 as scriptural evidence supporting this position.<sup>191</sup> Still, abstention from meat offered to idols is necessary for the following reasons:

A) “On account of our conscience, which is holy” (διὰ δὲ τὴν συνείδησιν τὴν ἡμετέραν ἁγίαν οὖσαν).

<sup>189</sup> Homer, *Odyssey* 11.37 (LCL 104,402). LCL edition reads κατατεθνηώτων in place of κατατεθνεώτων.

<sup>190</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.1.8.3 (GCS 12,159; SC 108,24). Translation: “Defiled and disgusting these [sacrificed meats] seem to me, to which fly ‘the souls of the corpses of the dead from the depth of Erebus’ looking for blood” (translation mine).

<sup>191</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.1.8.4-9.1 (GCS 12,159; SC 108,24). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,239.

B) “Out of detestation of the demons to which they are dedicated” (τῶν δαιμονίων διὰ τὴν βδελυρίαν, οἷς ἐπικατωνόμασται).

C) “On account of the instability of those who regard many things in a way that makes them prone to fall” (διὰ τὴν τῶν ὀλισθηρῶς τὰ πολλὰ ὑπολαμβανόντων ὑδαρότητα).<sup>192</sup>

In *Paed.* 3.3.25.2 we also find another passage with a thematic connection to one of the prohibitions:

ὅλοινοι οὖν οἱ θῆρες οἱ φυλακτικοί, οἷς τὸ αἷμα ἢ τροφή· οὐδὲ γὰρ θιγεῖν αἵματος ἀνθρώποις θέμις, οἷς τὸ σῶμα οὐδὲν ἄλλ' ἢ σὰρξ ἔστιν αἵματι γεωργουμένη. μετέσχηκεν τοῦ λόγου τὸ αἷμα τὸ ἀνθρώπινον καὶ τῆς χάριτος κοινωνεῖ τῷ πνεύματι, καὶν ἀδικήσῃ τις αὐτό, οὐ λήσεται.<sup>193</sup>

This passage is situated in the context of Clement's story about Scythians who eat their horses' blood and about Arabic nomads who occasionally consume the blood of camels. Commenting on this practice, Clement expresses his view that it is not right for a human being to eat (literally: to touch) blood. Determining the reason behind this prohibition is an arduous if not an impossible task since the Alexandrian's argumentation is very obscure.<sup>194</sup> In any event, Clement seems to be treating the blood consumption prohibition as binding for all people and appears to be connecting it with shedding of human blood<sup>195</sup> which is probably a reference to Gen 9:4-6.

<sup>192</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.1.8.4 (GCS 12,159; SC 108,24). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,239.

<sup>193</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.3.25.2 (GCS 12,251; SC 158,56). Translation: “Perish, then, the savage beasts whose food is blood! For it is unlawful for men, whose body is nothing but flesh elaborated of blood, to touch blood. For human blood has become a partaker of the Word: it is a participant of grace by the Spirit; and if any one injure him, he will not escape unnoticed”: Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,277.

<sup>194</sup> It has already been noted by Six, *Aposteldekret*, 102.

<sup>195</sup> See Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 43-44.

Now let us turn to the Book 4 of *Strom.* where Clement's other quotation of Acts 15:29 occurs. In chapter 15 of this book, Clement disagrees with the view of his opponents who claimed that knowledge was not given to all the followers of Christ, but only to a group of them. Clement, referring to 1 Cor 8:1, states that all believers have knowledge, and it is unbelievers that Paul has in mind when he writes the words of 1 Cor 8:7. Accordingly, Clement criticizes a view claiming that the teaching about food offered to idols was not announced among all believers. He also quotes 1 Cor 10:25 ("Everything sold in the shambles should be bought"<sup>196</sup> without anyone asking questions about it") implying that his opponents would need to interpret this sentence as an interrogative one in order to be coherent with their views, but such an interpretation, according to Clement, would be ridiculous.<sup>197</sup> Thus, it appears so far that Clement did not consider any kind of food as unclean in itself and, consequently, supported consumption of any kind of meat bought in the market without any investigation pertaining to its origin.

What was mentioned above constitutes a preceding context of Clement's quotation of Acts 15:29 in *Strom.* 4.15.97.3. The text of the whole point number 3 reads as follows:

(1) ὁ γὰρ ἀπόστολος «πάντα φησὶ, τὰ ἄλλα ὠνεῖσθε ἐκ μακέλλου μηδὲν (2) ἀνακρίνοντες», καθ' ὑπεξαίρεσιν τῶν δηλουμένων κατὰ τὴν ἐπιστολὴν τὴν καθολικὴν (3) τῶν ἀποστόλων ἀπάντων, σὺν τῇ εὐδοκίᾳ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, τὴν γεγραμμένην μὲν (4) ἐν ταῖς Πράξεσι τῶν ἀποστόλων, διακομισθεῖσαι δὲ εἰς τοὺς πιστοὺς δι' αὐτοῦ 5) διακονοῦντος τοῦ Παύλου· ἐμήνυσαν γὰρ «ἐπάναγκες ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖν εἰδωλοθύτων (6) καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντας ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξειν».<sup>198</sup>

<sup>196</sup> There is a slight change with respect to the source of the quotation: In 1 Cor 10:25, in place of "should be bought" (ἀγοράζειν δεῖ), we find imperative, 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural of the verb "to eat": ἐσθίετε.

<sup>197</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.15.97.1-2 (GCS 52,290-291; SC 463,216-218). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,426-427.

<sup>198</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.15.97.3 (GCS 52,291; SC 463,218). Variant readings: 3-4) τὴν γεγραμμένην...διακομισθεῖσαι (Joseph B. Mayor's edition, Otto Stählin's edition) : τῇ γεγραμμένῃ διακομισθείσῃ (*Codex Laurentianus*); 6) διατηροῦντας (Friedrich Sylburg's



This quotation, introduced as a direct speech, is close to the Alexandrian text of Acts,<sup>199</sup> as was the quotation in *Paed.* Nevertheless, Clement's explanations in point number 3 seem to contradict what was mentioned above with regard to the points 1 and 2: In the point 2, Clement, quoting 1 Cor 10:25, admitted that meat in the market should be bought without asking any questions about its provenance, in point 3, however, he states that the Apostolic Council's prohibitions constitute an exception to this rule.

In order to find a satisfactory solution to this problem, we need to read the last part of chapter 15 closely. Clement precedes it with quotations from 1 Cor 9:4-5 and 1 Cor 9:12, introduced with a statement referring to the already cited Apostolic Council's prohibitions. This statement, together with the beginning of the quotation from 1 Cor 9:4-5, reads as follows: ἕτερον οὖν ἐστὶ τὸ εἰρημένον πρὸς τοῦ ἀποστόλου· “Μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν φαγεῖν καὶ πιεῖν”;<sup>200</sup> (“Now, is it a different matter from what was said by the Apostle: ‘Have we not the right to eat and drink’?”). This sentence, in my opinion, seems to be a rhetorical question. By means of it and by means of the content it introduces, Clement appears to state that the prohibitions from Acts 15:29 should be interpreted according to the similar key as Paul's utterances

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edition, Otto Stählin's edition) : διατηροῦντες (*Codex Laurentianus*); πράξειν (all codices and editions of *Strom.*): πράξετε (best codices of NT): GCS 52,291; SC 463,40-42.51.218. Translation: “For the apostle says, All other things buy out of the shambles, asking no questions, with the exception of the things mentioned in the Catholic epistle of all the apostles, with the consent of the Holy Ghost, which is written in the Acts of the Apostles, and conveyed to the faithful by the hands of Paul himself. For they intimated that they must of necessity abstain from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which keeping themselves, they should do well”: Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,427.

<sup>199</sup> Differences with respect to the Alexandrian (and also NA<sup>28</sup>) text of Acts 15:29: In the quotation additional δεῖν is introduced; the form διατηροῦντας occurs in place of διατηροῦντες, and the form πράξειν occurs in place of πράξετε which is a result of introducing the citation as a direct speech.

<sup>200</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.15.97.4 (GCS 52,291; SC 463,218). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,427.

from 1 Cor 9:4-5 and 1 Cor 9:12. Accordingly, in Clement's view, Paul, abstaining from some legitimate actions for the greater good, gives other Christians an example of an occasional need to abstain from something legitimate for the same reason. Clement seems to suggest that at least some of the actions the Apostolic Council deemed necessary to abstain from, belong to the category of morally indifferent activities: Christians needed to avoid them not because of intrinsic evil pertaining to these actions, but for the greater good, e.g. to give a good example to others, to avoid scandalizing others etc. In this way, Christians that obey the decision of the Apostolic Council, act like Paul himself who has not used the right to eat and drink and the right to be accompanied by a believing woman (cf. 1 Cor 9:4-5) so that his actions may not become an obstacle in effective proclamation of the Gospel, as he states in 1 Cor 9:12.

It is to be noted that there is a thematic connection between these verses from 1 Cor and Acts 15:29, namely dietary issues and a man–woman relationship although the latter one is a little problematic because for Clement, the question of cultivating the practice described in 1 Cor 9:5 was not a moral choice between good and evil,<sup>201</sup> in contrast to the question of πορνεία, the practice of which is consistently regarded by Clement as morally wrong.<sup>202</sup>

After presenting two more quotations from 1 Cor (9:19-25 and 10:26), Clement finally summarizes his opinion in the following words:

‘διὰ τὴν συνείδησιν’ οὖν ἀφεκτέον ὧν ἀφεκτέον. ‘συνείδησιν δὲ λέγω οὐχὶ τὴν ἑαυτοῦ,’ γνωστικὴ γάρ, ‘ἀλλὰ τὴν τοῦ ἑτέρου,’ ἵνα μὴ κακῶς οἰκοδομηθῇ ἀμαθία

<sup>201</sup> In *Strom.* 3.6.53.1-3 (GCS 52,220), Clement makes a specific comment on the practice mentioned in 1 Cor 9:5: According to him, the wives of the apostles were taken with them on a missionary journey exclusively for missionary and not for marital purposes: “They took the women who were helping [them] with the ministry to housewives not as spouses, but as sisters” (translation mine). Greek text: οὐχ ὡς γαμετάς, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἀδελφὰς περιῆγον τὰς γυναῖκας συνδιακόνους ἐσομένας πρὸς τὰς οἰκουροὺς γυναῖκας).

<sup>202</sup> Cf. e.g., Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12.89.1-3; 4.8.61.1; 4.12.87.3 (GCS 52,237.276.286).

μιμούμενος ὃ μὴ γινώσκει, καταφρονητὴς ἀντὶ μεγαλόφρονος γινόμενος. ἵνα τί γὰρ ἢ ἐλευθερία μου κρίνεται ὑπὸ ἄλλης συνειδήσεως; εἰ ἐγὼ χάριτι μετέχω, τί βλασφημοῦμαι ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εὐχαριστῶ; πάντα οὖν ὅσα ποιεῖτε εἰς δόξαν θεοῦ ποιεῖτε· ὅσα ὑπὸ τὸν κανόνα τῆς πίστεως ποιεῖν ἐπιτέτραπται.<sup>203</sup>

These final words of chapter 15 may be treated as a summary of Clement's opinion on the dietary prohibitions. Clement, using Paul's words from 1 Cor 10:28-31 clarifies that a Christian whose conscience is filled with knowledge (γνωστική) needs to abstain from certain things for the sake of another whose conscience, lacking knowledge, may be scandalized. In light of what was said before, it seems that Clement refers to the dietary prohibitions mentioned in Acts 15:29. Accordingly, even if the whole chapter 15 from the Book 4 of *Strom.* is a little obscure, we can reasonably conclude that Clement, while writing this chapter, treated the observance of the above mentioned prohibitions as a temporary ruling which could possibly be changed when such alimentary behaviour would not result in any evil outcome. Nevertheless, this does not seem to apply to the prohibition of πορνεία. The wider context of both *Strom.* and *Paed.* compels a reader to treat πορνεία as a different issue from the problem of dietary regulations. In light of the evidence mentioned above, dietary issues are for Clement in principle a morally indifferent matter, although in certain circumstances some dietary practices may also be morally wrong. The word πορνεία, however, and its cognate verb πορνεύω are always mentioned by Clement in a negative light. A very clear example of this can be found in *Paed.* 2.10: "Wherefore he who commits fornication is wholly dead to God, and is abandoned by the Word as a dead body by the spirit" (διὸ καὶ πάντως ὁ

<sup>203</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.15.98.2-3 (GCS 52,291-292; SC 463,220). Translation: "For conscience' sake, then, we are to abstain from what we ought to abstain. Conscience, I say, not his own, for it is endued with knowledge, but that of the other, lest he be trained badly, and by imitating in ignorance what he knows not, he become a despiser instead of a strong-minded man. For why is my liberty judged of by another conscience? For if I by grace am a partaker, why am I evil spoken of for that for which I give thanks? Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God — what you are commanded to do by the rule of faith": Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,427.

πορνείων ἀπέθανεν θεῶ, καὶ καταλέλειπται ὑπὸ τοῦ λόγου, καθάπερ ὑπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος, νεκρός).<sup>204</sup>

As to the meaning of the Apostolic Council's prohibition of πορνεία in Clement's view, a clue can be found in one of his statements from *Strom* 7.12. Clement writes what follows: "For we have already often above shown the three varieties of fornication, according to the apostle – love of pleasure, love of money, idolatry" (πορνείας γὰρ ἤδη πολλάκις τρεῖς τὰς ἀνωτάτω διαφορὰς παρεστήσαμεν κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον, φιληδονίαν, φιλαργυρίαν, εἰδωλολατρείαν).<sup>205</sup> It is, thus, evident that Clement has, in general, a very broad understanding of the word πορνεία: for him, this word denotes not only sexual immorality, but can also be used figuratively to denote avarice and idolatry. Therefore, it is possible that a commandment from Acts 15:29 to abstain from πορνεία proscribed in Clement's opinion all the three types of fornication mentioned above. If this is the case, then shunning idolatry would be a common thread linking this prohibition with the remaining three.

Summary:

- A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 (twice).
- B) Textual version: Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 4.
- D) Clement's understanding of the prohibitions:
  - a) ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων: Clement admitted that any food consumption was, in principle, morally indifferent (ἀδιάφορος). Nevertheless, according to him, a Christian must abstain from food offered to idols for important reasons, e.g. if its consumption would scandalize others.

<sup>204</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.10.100.1 (GCS 12,217; SC 108,190). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,263. Cf. also Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 3.12.89.1-3; 4.8.61.1; 4.12.87.3 (GCS 52,237.276.286). Book 3 of *Strom.* is especially dedicated to an issue of sexual immorality.

<sup>205</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.12.75.3 (GCS 17,54). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,544.

b) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: It is not easy to summarize Clement's position on blood consumption. On the one hand, eating blood, like any other food, should, in theory, be morally indifferent for him. On the other hand, however, he treated blood consumption as something abhorrent that neither Christians nor pagans should practice. In his view, eating blood may result in participation in a meal with demons (and this would be an act of a communion with them). He also seems to suggest that there may be a causative connection between eating blood and shedding blood.

c) ἀπέχεσθαι πνικτῶν: Clement did not explain the question of eating strangled animals explicitly. The explanations mentioned above in the sub-point “b” are probably valid for this issue as well.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι (τῆς) πορνείας: Probably shunning sexual immorality in a broad sense and possibly also shunning πορνεία in a metaphorical sense: avarice and idolatry.

## 2. Origen Adamantius of Alexandria

After the analysis of Clement's writings, we continue our research with the literary legacy of his famous disciple, Origen (c. 185 – c. 253), who was undoubtedly one of the most prolific and influential Christian writers in antiquity. Originally from Alexandria, he spent most of his adult life in Caesarea Maritima where he also composed a great number of his literary works. A substantial part of these works consists of homilies and commentaries on different books of the Bible. Unfortunately, no extant work of his is dedicated to the explanation of Acts. Nevertheless, references to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions can be found among other writings of Origen.

From a chronological point of view, the first reference of Origen to the above mentioned prohibitions occurs in his *Homilies on Numbers*, more exactly in *Homily XVI*. Since the text of these homilies is not extant in the original Greek, we need to rely on its ancient translation into Latin by Rufinus

of Aquileia. The reference in question occurs in the context of Origen's reflection on Num 23:24b, the very last part of the Balaam's Second Oracle. The text of this whole verse, as we find it in the *Homily XVI*, reads as follows:

V.24a: *Ecce, inquit, populus sicut catulus leonis exsurget, et sicut leo exsultabit.*<sup>206</sup>

V.24b: *Non dormiet, donec comedat praedam, et sanguinem vulneratorum bibat.*<sup>207</sup>

The Latin translation of this verse reflects its LXX version (MT reads lioness/lion in place of a lion's whelp). The people of Israel are compared to a lion that does not go to sleep until it eats its prey and drinks the blood of its victims. Reading this biblical text, Origen ponders on the reason for the existence of blood-drinking imagery in it. The apparent whimsicality of this type of expression rests on a fact that it was forbidden for Jews to drink blood. It is in this context that Origen states:

*Quomodo enim iste populus tam laudabilis, tam magnificus, de quo tanta praeconia sermo dinumerat, in hoc veniet,*<sup>208</sup> *ut 'sanguinem vulneratorum bibat', cum tam validis praeceptis cibus sanguinis interdicatur a Deo, ut etiam nos, qui ex gentibus vocati sumus, necessario iubeamur 'abstinere nos', sicut 'ab his, quae idolis immolantur', ita 'et a sanguine'?*<sup>209</sup>

In this text, Origen probably refers to Acts 15:29. He does not mention all the proscriptions, but only two of them: abstaining from what is offered to idols and abstaining from blood. The latter one is mentioned because of its thematic connection with Num 23:24. The reason for mentioning the former one, however, would lie in Origen's willingness to specify the degree to which

<sup>206</sup> Origen, *Hom. Num.* 16.8.1 (GCS 30,151; SC 442, 258). Translation: "Behold, he says, the people will rise like a lion's whelp and like a lion will exalt himself" (translation mine).

<sup>207</sup> Origen, *Hom. Num.* 16.9.1 (GCS 30,151; SC 442, 260). Translation: "It [the lion] will not sleep until it eats its prey and drinks the blood of the victims" (translation mine).

<sup>208</sup> SC 442,262 in place of *ueniet* reads *ueuiet* which is an obvious printing error.

<sup>209</sup> Origen, *Hom. Num.* 16.9.1-2 (GCS 30,151; SC 442,262). Translation: "For how come this people so commendable, so eminent, about whom so many laudations the sermon enumerates comes to the point of 'drinking blood of the wounded' when consumption of blood was forbidden by God with a precept so important that even we, who have been called from the Gentiles, are commanded 'to abstain' necessarily 'from the things offered to idols' as also 'from blood'" (translation mine).

he and other Christians of Gentile origin need to observe the blood prohibition: it is, namely, necessary to abstain from blood consumption in the same way as Christians abstain from food offered to idols. This connection possibly suggests Origen's understanding of eating blood as an activity closely connected to idolatry.

The next of Origen's references to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions can be found in his *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* written in Cesarea Maritima about the year 243.<sup>210</sup> As in the case of *Hom. in Num.*, the Greek text of *Com. in Rom.* is not extant (except for some passages) and we need to rely on the Latin translation by Rufinus of Aquilea from ca. 405-406.<sup>211</sup>

The reference to the prohibitions appears when Origen comments on Rom 2:25-29. The famous Alexandrian rebuts the claim that Christians should be circumcised on the grounds that such a command was given to Abraham. In Origen's opinion, it is important to read the Pentateuch attentively in order to understand to whom a particular commandment was given. The rule of circumcision was not given to foreigners because they are not mentioned as its addressees, except the foreign slaves who were serving the Israelites.<sup>212</sup> All the rules binding not only Israelites, but also foreigners, were clearly stipulated as such. For the purpose of showing an example of such a rule, Origen provides a quotation from Lev 17:10-12 which forbids blood consumption both to Israelites and to foreigners who live with them. In Origen's understanding, Christians of Gentile origin belong to this group of foreigners and this practice was also given to them to observe.<sup>213</sup> It is in this context that Origen mentions the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. He writes:

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<sup>210</sup> M. Fédou, SC 532,15.

<sup>211</sup> M. Fédou, SC 532,9.

<sup>212</sup> Origen, *Com. Rom.* 2.9.16 (SC 532, 388-389). Cf. Gen 17:10-13.

<sup>213</sup> Origen, *Com. Rom.* 2.9.16-17 (SC 532, 390-391).

*Haec namque ita intellegens in lege scripta tunc beatum illud apostolorum concilium decernebat dogmata et decreta gentibus scribens ut abstinerent se non solum ab his quae idolis immolantur et a fornicatione sed a sanguine et a suffocato.*<sup>214</sup>

The last part of the text above is not an exact quotation, but a paraphrase of one of these verses of Acts where the prohibitions are enumerated, probably of Acts 15:29. The order in which the prohibitions are enumerated is clearly subject to the author's rhetoric: Origen, by putting "not only" (*non solum*) before food offered to idols and unchastity indicates that he treats these prohibitions as more obvious than abstaining from blood and strangled animals. Consequently, he treats the former ones as not needing any additional explanation. As regards the last two prohibitions, Origen understands them as rules originating from Lev 17:10-14, and thus treats them as dietary rulings proscribing consumption of blood and animals whose blood has not been removed. According to Origen, since the foreigners living among Israelites were also bound by these rules, the Jerusalem Council decided that the prohibitions in question should be kept by the Christians of Gentile origin as well.

In Origen's *Commentary on the Letter to the Romans* there is one more passage relevant for this thesis. It is located in Origen's comment on Rom 13:3-4. Origen tries to explain in what way a person who has worldly power can be considered the servant of God (even if this person is not a Christian). He takes Acts 15:23-24.28-29 as an example helpful in clarifying this problem and at the beginning of his explanation, he quotes these verses. The quotation of Acts 15:28-29 reads as follows:

*Placuit ergo sancto Spiritui et nobis nihil amplius superponi uobis ponderis praeter ea quae necessaria sunt ut abstineatis uos ab his quae idolis immolantur et*

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<sup>214</sup> Origen, *Com. Rom.* 2.9.17 (SC 532, 390). Translation: "For in those days the blessed council of the apostles, understanding that these things were written in the law in this way, for that reason pronounced dogmas and decrees for the Gentiles, writing that they should not only keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols and from fornication but also from blood and strangled things": Transl. T.P. Scheck, FC.NT 103,151.



*sanguine et suffocatis et fornicatione; a quibus custodientes uosmet ipsos bene agetis. Valetis.*<sup>215</sup>

Directly after this quotation, we find his commentary on the prohibitions, at the beginning of which he enumerates these proscriptions for the second time:

*In his ergo praeceptis in quibus dicit nihil amplius imponendum esse oneris his qui ex gentibus credunt, nisi ut abstineant se ab his quae idolis immolantur et sanguine et suffocatis et fornicatione, neque homicidium prohibetur neque adulterium neque furtum neque masculorum concubitus neque cetera crimina quae diuinis et humanis legibus puniuntur. Quod si illa sola quae supra memorauit obseruanda dicit esse Christianis uidebitur eis de ceteris dedisse licentiam. Sed uide ordinationem Spiritus sancti; quoniam quidem cetera crimina saeculi legibus uindicantur et superfluum uidebatur ea nunc diuina lege prohibere quae sufficienter humana lege plectuntur, illa sola de quibus nihil humana lex dixerat, religioni tamen uidebantur conuenire decernit.*<sup>216</sup>

In the above explanation, Origen states, although indirectly, how he interprets the prohibitions. He states, namely, that the types of behaviour forbidden by them cannot be the trespasses which are already proscribed by these God's ordinances which are present in human laws, mentioning explicitly as an example four such trespasses: murder, adultery, stealing and male homosexual relations. In Origen's view, it is clear enough that these

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<sup>215</sup> Origen, *Com. Rom.* 9.28.1 (SC 555,170). Translation: "Therefore, it has pleased the Holy Spirit and us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials, that you abstain from what is sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication; by keeping yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell": Transl. T.P. Scheck, FC.NT 104,224.

<sup>216</sup> Origen, *Com. Rom.* 9.28.1 (SC 555,170.172). Translation: "In these precepts, then, in which he says that no further burden is to be imposed upon the Gentile believers except that they should abstain from what is sacrificed to idols and from blood and from strangled things and from fornication, neither murder is prohibited nor adultery nor theft nor homosexuality nor other crimes that are punished by divine and human laws. But if that which he mentioned above alone has to be observed by Christians, it will appear that he has given them license in respect to these other crimes. But observe the ordinance of the Holy Spirit; for indeed since the other crimes are avenged by secular laws and since it was deemed superfluous now to prohibit these things by divine law, since they are adequately punished by human law, he decrees only those things concerning which no human law had spoken about but which seemed to be in agreement with the religion": Transl. T.P. Scheck, FC.NT 104,224-225.

deeds are forbidden, therefore, proscribing them once again by the Apostolic Council would have been redundant. Consequently, the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions must refer to such types of behaviour which, tolerated by pagans, were against God's ordinances.

Another occurrence of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions can be found in Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, written by him between 244 and 249.<sup>217</sup> This occurrence appears in the context of Origen's explanation of Matt 15:10-20. Origen, commenting on Jesus' teaching concerning the question what does and what does not make a human being unclean, notices that Jesus declared all kinds of food as clean.<sup>218</sup> Origen understands this statement as an assurance that food cannot defile human beings spiritually by its very nature, it can do it, however, when it is associated with evil coming from a human heart. Origen puts it in the following way:

Εἰ δὲ χρὴ ὑπογράψαι τὰ κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιον ἀκάθαρτα βρώματα, φήσομεν ὅτι τοιαῦτά ἐστι τὰ ἀπὸ πλεονεξίας πεπορισμένα καὶ ἀπὸ αἰσχροκερδείας περιγεγεννημένα καὶ ἀπὸ φιληδονίας λαμβανόμενα καὶ ἀπὸ τοῦ θεοποιεῖσθαι τιμωμένην τὴν γαστέρα, ὅταν αὕτη καὶ αἱ κατ' αὐτὴν ὀρέξεις καὶ μὴ ὁ λόγος ἄρχῃ τῆς ψυχῆς ἡμῶν.<sup>219</sup>

Thus, it seems that for Origen the food can be unclean only if it is used in an improper way, for instance out of covetousness or gluttony. It is not the nature of food that determines its status as clean or unclean, but its use. In light of this conclusion, let us focus on the text containing the reference to the

<sup>217</sup> E. Stanula, "Wprowadzenie", Orygenes, *Komentarz do Ewangelii według Mateusza* (ed. E. Stanula – transl. K. Augustyniak) (Kraków 1998) 7; Cf. R. Girod, SC 162,7.

<sup>218</sup> Origen, *Com. Matt* 11.12 (SC 162,328).

<sup>219</sup> Origen, *Com. Matt* 11.12 (SC 162,330.332). Translation: "And if it be necessary to delineate the foods which are unclean according to the Gospel, we will say that they are such as are supplied by covetousness, and are the result of base love of gain, and are taken up from love of pleasure, and from deifying the belly which is treated with honour, when it, with its appetites, and not reason, rules our souls": Transl. J. Patrick, ANF 9,441.

Apostolic Council's prohibitions. This text<sup>220</sup> directly follows the passage quoted above:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ γινώσκοντες δαιμονίοις κεχρησθαί τινα, ἢ μὴ γινώσκοντες μὲν, ὑπονοοῦντες δὲ καὶ διακρινόμενοι περὶ τούτου, εἰ χρησαίμεθα τοῖς τοιούτοις, οὐκ «εἰς δόξαν Θεοῦ» αὐτοῖς κεκρήμεθα οὐδὲ ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, οὐ μόνον τῆς περὶ τοῦ εἰδωλόθυτα εἶναι ὑπολήψεως κατακρινούσης τὸν ἐσθίοντα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς περὶ τούτου διακρίσεως. «ὁ γὰρ διακρινόμενος, κατὰ τὸν ἀπόστολον, ἐὰν φάγῃ κατακέκριται, ὅτι οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως· πᾶν δὲ ὃ οὐκ ἐκ πίστεως ἁμαρτία ἐστίν.»<sup>221</sup> «ἐκ πίστεως» μὴν οὖν ἐσθίει ὁ πεπιστευκὼς μὴ ἐν εἰδωλείοις τεθύσθαι τὸ ἐσθιόμενον μηδὲ πνικτὸν αὐτὸ εἶναι ἢ αἷμα, οὐκ «ἐκ πίστεως» δὲ ὁ περὶ τούτων τινὸς διακρινόμενος· καὶ κοινωνὸς δὲ «τῶν δαιμονίων» γίνεται ὁ καὶ αὐτὰ εἰδὼς «δαιμονίοις» τεθύσθαι καὶ οὐδὲν ἥττον χρώμενος μετὰ μεμολυσμένους τῆς περὶ τῶν δαιμονίων κοινωνησάντων τῷ θύματι φαντασίας. Καὶ ὁ ἀπόστολος μέντοι ἐπιστάμενος μὴ τὴν φύσιν τῶν βρωμάτων αἰτίαν εἶναι βλάβης τῷ χρωμένῳ ἢ ὠφελείας τῷ ἀπεχομένῳ, ἀλλὰ τὰ δόγματα καὶ τὸν ἐνυπάρχοντα λόγον, εἶπε· «βρῶμα δὲ ἡμᾶς οὐ παρίστησι τῷ θεῷ· οὔτε γὰρ ἐὰν φάγωμεν περισσευόμεθα, οὔτε ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν ὑστερούμεθα.»<sup>222</sup>

Origen enumerates three kinds of food that should not be consumed: food offered to idols, strangled animals and blood. He does not mention explicitly that the prohibition to eat these things comes from Acts 15:29, nevertheless, we can rightly assume it on the basis of his already quoted

<sup>220</sup> Origen, *Com. Matt* 11.12 (SC 162,330.332). Translation: "But as for us who know that some things are used by demons, or if we do not know, but suspect, and are in doubt about it, if we use such things, we have used them not to the glory of God, nor in the name of Christ; for not only does the suspicion that things have been sacrificed to idols condemn him who eats, but even the doubt concerning this; for he that doubts, according to the Apostle, is condemned if he eat, because he eats not of faith; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. He then eats in faith who believes that that which is eaten has not been sacrificed in the temples of idols, and that it is not strangled nor blood; but he eats not of faith who is in doubt about any of these things. And the man who knowing that they have been sacrificed to demons nevertheless uses them, becomes a communicant with demons, while at the same time, his imagination is polluted with reference to demons participating in the sacrifice. And the Apostle, however, knowing that it is not the nature of meats which is the cause of injury to him who uses them or of advantage to him who refrains from their use, but opinions and the reason which is in them, said, But meat commends us not to God, for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we eat not are we the worse": Transl. J. Patrick, ANF 9,441.

<sup>221</sup> Rom 14:23. In NA<sup>28</sup>, δὲ occurs in place of γὰρ.

<sup>222</sup> 1 Cor 8:8. In NA<sup>28</sup>, παραστήσει occurs in place of παρίστησι and the last part of the quotation reads as follows: οὔτε ἐὰν μὴ φάγωμεν ὑστερούμεθα, οὔτε ἐὰν φάγωμεν περισσεύομεν.

statements from his former works. He states once again that these three types of food are not unclean by their nature. Origen expresses an opinion that eating them in good faith would not defile anyone, corroborating this opinion by a quotation from 1 Cor 8:8. Nevertheless, it was also Origen's belief that demons feed on what was offered to idols as well as on blood and on dead animals still having blood in them.<sup>223</sup> Consequently, consuming these types of food knowingly or even in doubt equals entering the communion with demons.

In Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel according to Matthew*, we find one more reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. It appears when Origen explains the meaning of Matt 23:1-12. Unfortunately, this part of the commentary is not extant in original Greek, so we need to rely on its ancient Latin translation.

*...omnes apostoli vetent fideles vivere secundum litteram legis, sicut testatur epistola apostolorum in Actibus, quam miserunt ad gentes, ut nihil servent ex lege nisi immolatum et suffocatum et fornicationem...*<sup>224</sup>

The text is peculiar due to the absence of blood among the enumerated prohibitions. It is impossible to state if this omission originated in the non-extant original Greek text or if it was a result of a translator's or a copist's activity. Neither in this text nor in its nearest context the interpretation of the prohibitions is provided. The only relevant information seems to be an opinion about the provenance of the prohibitions from the Mosaic Law and about their binding force for Christians which was still retained in contrast to the binding force of the Mosaic Law itself.

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<sup>223</sup> This belief is expressed in the passage from *Contra Celsum* quoted below (8.30). It has to be noted that, as H. Chadwick puts it, "[t]he idea that daemons feed on sacrifices is universal at this time": Origen, *Contra Celsum* (ed. & transl. H. Chadwick) (Cambridge 1980) 146, n.1 (Cf. also the examples of this view mentioned there).

<sup>224</sup> Origen, *Com. Matt.: Commentariorum Series* 10,10-13 (PG 13,1613-1614; GCS 38,19). Translation: "...the apostles forbade the faithful to live according to the letter of the Law, as is testified by the apostolic letter which they sent to the Gentiles so that they do not observe anything according to the Law with the exception of [abstaining from] idol sacrifices, of what was strangled and of sexual immorality..." (translation mine).

The culmination of Origen's understanding of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions seems to be expressed in his apologetic work *Contra Celsum*, written about 248.<sup>225</sup> It appears in the context of Origen's rebuttal of Celsus' claims that Christians are not consistent in their practice: they do not eat food sacrificed to idols in order not to have any fellowship with demons, but, at the same time, they associate with demons by eating regular food, by drinking wine and water and even by breathing air because it is demons who administer such goods.<sup>226</sup> The position of Origen can be roughly summarized in a statement that whatever Christians do in accordance with the principles of their faith, can by no means be considered as having a feast with demons.<sup>227</sup> The prohibitions of the Apostolic Council are mentioned by Origen in the course of his explanation of Jewish and Christian approaches to food consumption. He states that Jews abstain from different types of food (among others from blood and from the meat of animals killed by predators) whereas Christians follow the teaching of Jesus who said that "it is not what enters the mouth that defiles a man, but what comes out of the mouth".<sup>228</sup> Still, since a need arose among Christians to clarify these matters with greater precision, the apostles and the elders decided to meet and to do it. Origen relates their decision in the following way:

- (1) ἔδοξε τοῖς τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ συναχθεῖσιν ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ
- (2) πρεσβυτέροις καὶ, ὡς αὐτοὶ οὗτοι ὠνόμασαν, [καὶ] τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι γράψαι τοῖς
- (3) ἀπὸ τῶν ἔθνῶν πιστεύουσιν ἐπιστολὴν, μόνα, ὡς ὠνόμασαν, {τὰ} ἐπάναγκες

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<sup>225</sup> About the date of *Contra Celsum* see: M. Borret, SC 132,15-21; Origen, *Contra Celsum* (ed. & transl. H. Chadwick), XIV-XV.

<sup>226</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.28 (SuppVC 54,543-544).

<sup>227</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.32 (SuppVC 54,54,547-548).

<sup>228</sup> Matt 15:11.

(4) ἀπαγορεύουσιν ἐσθίειν ταῦτα δ' ἐστὶ τὰ ἥτοι εἰδωλόθουτα ἢ τὰ πνικτὰ ἢ τὸ αἷμα.<sup>229</sup>

The fact that Origen mentions Antioch, and not Jerusalem, as a venue of the council, does not appear to be significant: it can be explained as a simple slip of the pen.<sup>230</sup> As in a case of the above mentioned Greek quotation from *Com. Matt*, also in *Contra Celsum* only three apostolic prohibitions are enumerated: offerings to idols, strangled animals and blood. Now let us see how Origen understands them:

Τὸ μὲν γὰρ “εἰδωλόθυτον θύεται δαιμονίοις”, καὶ οὐ χρὴ τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπον “κοινωνὸν τραπέζης δαιμονίων γίνεσθαι”. τὰ δὲ πνικτὰ τοῦ αἵματος μὴ ἐκκριθέντος, ὅπερ φασὶν εἶναι τροφήν δαιμόνων, τρεφομένων ταῖς ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἀναθυμιάσεσιν, ἀπαγορεύει ὁ λόγος, ἵνα μὴ τραφῶμεν τροφῇ δαιμόνων, τάχα τινῶν τοιούτων πνευμάτων συντραφησομένων ἡμῖν ἐὰν μεταλαμβάνωμεν τῶν πνικτῶν. Ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων περὶ τῶν πνικτῶν σαφὲς εἶναι δύναται τὸ περὶ τῆς ἀποχῆς τοῦ αἵματος.<sup>231</sup>

Origen presents in this passage what has already been signalled above: He finds a reason for abstaining from offerings to idols, strangled animals and blood in the necessity of shunning any kind of table fellowship with demons. Whatever was offered to idols, was in fact offered to demons so, on this ground, eating such food would mean putting oneself in the company of evil spirits. The same applies to blood and strangled animals: Since in Origen's opinion demons feed on vapours emitted by blood (also by

<sup>229</sup> Textual variants: (2) Second καὶ is omitted in Spencer's edition. (3) τὰ is added in Wifstrand's edition. (4) ἀπαγορεύουσιν M : ἀπαγορεύουσιν A: Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.29 (SuppVC 544-545). Translation: “...it seemed good to the apostles of Jesus and the elders assembled together in Antioch, and, as they put it, ‘to the Holy Spirit, to write a letter to the Gentile believers, demanding that they should abstain only from what they called ‘the essentials’. These are things sacrificed to idols, or things strangled, or blood”: Transl. H. Chadwick, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 472.

<sup>230</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* (ed. & transl. H. Chadwick), 472, n.7.

<sup>231</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.30 (SuppVC 54,545). Translation: “That which is offered to idols is sacrificed to daemons, and a man of God ought not to become a partaker of the table of daemons. The Bible forbids things strangled because the blood has not been removed, which, they say, is the food of daemons who are nourished by the vapours rising from it, in order that we may not be fed on daemons' food, perhaps because if we were to partake of things strangled some spirits of this nature might be fed together with us. From what has been said about things strangled the explanation for abstinence from blood can be clearly seen”: Transl. H. Chadwick, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 473.

blood enclosed in a carcass), Christians may not eat such things because of a risk of sharing a meal together with a demon and this would be against Paul's teaching from 1 Cor 10:21, to which Origen alludes in the beginning of the passage quoted above.

Nevertheless, the opinion that has just been presented is not Origen's final word on the matter. In the words which follow directly the last cited passage, he provides valuable clues for a proper understanding of his thought:

(1) Ἐκ δὲ τῶν εἰρημένων περὶ τῶν πνικτῶν σαφὲς εἶναι δύναται τὸ περὶ τῆς ἀποχῆς (2) τοῦ αἵματος. Καὶ οὐκ ἀπίθανόν γε γενόμενόν με κατὰ τοὺς τόπους ὑπομνησθῆναι (3) χαριεστάτης γνώμης, ἣ καὶ οἱ πολλοὶ τῶν Χριστιανῶν ἀναγεγραμμένη ἐν ταῖς Σέξτου (4) γνώμαις ἐντυγχάνουσιν, οὕτως ἐχούσῃ· “Ἐμψύχων χρῆσις μὲν ἀδιάφορον, ἀποχὴ δὲ (5) λογικώτερον.” Οὐχ ἀπλῶς οὖν κατὰ τι πάτριον τῶν νομιζομένων ἱερείων εἶναι καὶ (6) θυομένων παρὰ τοῖς λεγομένοις θεοῖς ἢ ἥρωσιν ἢ δαίμοσιν ἀπεχόμεθα, ἀλλὰ διὰ (7) λόγους πλείονας, ὧν ἀπὸ μέρους ἐξεθέμην τινάς. Ἀλλὰ καὶ οὐχ, ὥσπερ ἀφεκτέον (8) πάσης κακίας καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ κακίας, καὶ ζώων ἀπάντων βρώσεως. Ἀφεκτέον δὲ οὐ (9) μόνον ζώων βρώσεως ἀλλὰ καὶ παντὸς οὐτινοσοῦν, εἰ ἀπὸ κακίας καὶ τῶν ἀπὸ (10) κακίας χρησαίμεθα τοῖς βρώμασιν· ἀφεκτέον γὰρ τοῦ ἐσθίειν κατὰ (11) γαστριμαργίαν ἢ κατὰ τὸ ἄγεσθαι ὑφ' ἡδονῆς χωρὶς τῆς εἰς ὑγείαν τοῦ σώματος καὶ θεραπείαν αὐτοῦ προθέσεως.<sup>232</sup>

Origen states that abstinence from food associated with a non-Christian cult is being practiced for several reasons (διὰ λόγους πλείονας). Not all of these reasons are mentioned by him, as he himself admits. Nevertheless, he clarifies that eating any kind of food is not wrong in itself.

<sup>232</sup> Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.30 (SuppVC 54,545). Textual variants: 2) τὸν τόπον P. 3) σέξτου P : σέκστου A. 8) After βρώσεως, ἀφεκτέον is added: Bouhéreau. 11) κατὰ τὸ Wendland: καθὸ A: Ibid., 545. Translation: “It is not irrelevant for me to mention in this connection a very graceful maxim written in the *Maxims* of Sextus which even the multitude of Christians read. It is as follows: ‘It is a matter of moral indifference to eat living things, but abstinence is more rational.’ Therefore, it is not simply because we follow a custom of our fathers that we abstain from what are supposed to be victims sacrificed to the so-called gods, or heroes, or daemons, but for several reasons some of which I have set forth in part. Moreover, we ought not to abstain from the food of all animals in the way that we do from all evil and its results. But we ought to abstain not only from the food of animals, but also from everything whatever if it implies eating the food associated with evil and its consequences. For we ought to abstain from eating with gluttonous motives or merely because of a desire for pleasure without having in view the health of the body and its restoration”: Transl. H. Chadwick, Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 473.

This view of his is expressed twice in the last quoted passage. First, it is presented by means of a quotation from Sextus' *Maxims* in which, although abstinence from meats is praised as more rational, eating animals is regarded as morally indifferent. Second, Origen writes that there is no equation between abstaining from eating animals and abstaining from evil. In other words, the consumption of meat is not a sort of action that could be classified as evil. Consequently, eating meat is not wrong in principle, but it becomes wrong if it is associated with any kind of a morally wrong choice, like idolatry or gluttony.

Finally, it has to be noted that both the extant Greek text of *Com. Matt* and the Greek text of *Contra Celsum* Origen omit πορνεία from the list of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. Nevertheless, the word πορνεία can be found in the closer contexts of Origen's references to Acts 15 in both these works (*Com. Matt* 11.15; *Contra Celsum* 8.29). In both cases, πορνεία appears in a plural form as a part of a quotation from Matt 15:19 in which it is one of the examples showing what in reality defiles a human being. Thus, in these two works πορνεία belongs to such a category of deeds that is different from the dietary laws and, therefore, it should be interpreted differently. This is probably the reason why Origen does not mention it there together with the other prohibitions.

#### Summary:

A) Verses quoted: There are two quotations and five references to the prohibitions.

B) Textual version: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4 in *Com. Rom.*;<sup>233</sup> 3 in *Com. Matt*,<sup>234</sup> 3 in *Contra Celsum*; 2 in *Hom. Num.*

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<sup>233</sup> The set of four prohibitions appears three times.



D) Origen's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) [ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων] / μὴ ἐν εἰδωλείοις τεθύσθαι τὸ ἐσθιόμενον / ἀπαγορεύουσιν ἐσθίειν (...) εἰδωλόθυτα / *abstinere ab his quae idolis immolantur / ut nihil servent ex lege nisi immolatum*: Abstaining from food offered to idols is necessary for several reasons, among others to avoid table fellowship with demons. Nevertheless, no food is contaminated in its nature. Consequently, eating food offered to idols unconsciously does not defile anyone.

b) [ἀπέχεσθαι] τοῦ αἵματος / *abstinere a sanguine*: Everything mentioned above in point a applies to abstaining from blood consumption as well. Regulations from Lev 17:10-14, addressed not only to Israelites, but also to foreigners, provide an additional reason for it.

c) [ἀπέχεσθαι τοῦ πνικτοῦ] / *abstinere a suffocato / ut nihil servent ex lege nisi (...) suffocatum*: Everything mentioned in points a and b applies to abstaining from strangled animals as well.

d) *Abstinere a fornicatione / ut nihil servent ex lege nisi (...) fornicationem*: Origen's mentions of *fornicatio* as one of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions are found only in the Latin translations of his texts which are not extant in Greek. In one of these texts (*Com. Rom.* 9.28.1), he clarifies that according to him the prohibition of *fornicatio* forbids morally wrong behaviour which was not forbidden by civil authorities. *Fornicatio*, unlike food consumption, is always a disorder that defiles the ones who practice it.

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<sup>234</sup> The set of three prohibitions appears twice, but the two sets are not identical: The first one contains prohibitions of food offered to idols, blood and strangled animals whereas the second one contains prohibitions of food offered to idols, strangled animals and fornication.

### 3. Methodius of Olympus

Methodius, another early Christian author who quoted the Eastern variant of Acts 15:20.29, was born in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (the exact date is not known) and finished his life as a martyr probably in 311.<sup>235</sup> According to Jerome, he was bishop of Olympus in Lycia and then of Tyre.<sup>236</sup> Being a talented writer, Methodius composed a number of different works pertaining to Christian faith. Not all of his writings survived, and a number of them are extant only in translation.

It is to this latter category, that his short treatise containing explicit quotations of Acts 15:20.29 belongs. It has been preserved only in Old Church Slavonic and its first modern language translation (into German) was published by G.N. Bonwetsch in 1891.<sup>237</sup> The treatise's full title reads: *About Distinction of Food. And about the Young Heifer which Is Mentioned in Leviticus and with whose Ashes the Sinners Were Sprinkled*<sup>238</sup> and it is labelled as *De cibis* for brevity. To the best of my knowledge, the Old Church Slavonic text has not been published. Although the manuscript is available online, I will rely on Bonwetsch's translation and notes due to my feeble knowledge of Old Church Slavonic.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>235</sup> H. Musurillo, ACW 27,4-5.

<sup>236</sup> Jerome of Stridon, *De viris illustribus* 83 (PL 23,727-730). Translation: E. Cushing Richardson, NPNF 2-03,378. Cf. the discussion about historicity of Methodius as bishop and martyr in: L.G. Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus. Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ* (Washington, DC 1997) 18-21.

<sup>237</sup> Methodius von Olymp, *I. Schriften* (ed. & transl. G.N. Bonwetsch) (Erlangen – Leipzig 1891).

<sup>238</sup> *Über die Unterscheidung der Speise. Und über die junge Kuh, welche in Leviticus erwähnt wird, mit deren Asche die Sünder besprengt wurden*: Transl. G.N. Bonwetsch, GCS 27,424. An error in the title is to be noted: The young cow in question is not mentioned in Leviticus, but in Numbers 19.

<sup>239</sup> Recently (2015), Ralph Cleminson translated *De cibis* from Old Church Slavonic into English. His translation entitled "On the Distinction between Foods (*De Cibis*)" is available online at Roger Pearse's website who commissioned and edited the translation: <http://www.roger-pearse.com/weblog/2015/07/31/methodius-of-olympus-de-cibis-now-online->

The reference to Acts 15:20 is a part of a more substantial quotation from Acts 15 which is preceded by a reflection about the abolition of food differences with regard to their cleanness. Methodius finds grounds for the existence of such abolition in the words of Jesus from Matt 15:11 and Mark 7:15 as well as in Peter's vision from Acts 10.<sup>240</sup> The text of Acts 15:19-20 in Bonwetsch's translation reads as follows:

*Ich urteile, nicht Beschwerde zu machen den Heiden, welche sich zu Gott wenden, sondern ihnen zu schreiben, daß sie sich bewahren vor den Unreinigkeiten der Heiden und der Götzen, und vor Unzucht, und Ersticktem und Blut.*<sup>241</sup>

This quotation is basically in accordance with the Eastern version of Acts 15:20, the only difference seems to be the addition "der Heiden und". These words were possibly added by a translator of this text into Old Church Slavonic and were not found in the original version, as Bonwetsch appears to suggest.<sup>242</sup>

As regards Acts 15:29, it is quoted as follows:

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[in-english/](#) (accessed on 3.11.2016). R. Pearse states in footnote 3 of the above translation that "[t]he manuscript used for this translation is number 40 on the Holy Trinity – St Sergius Lavra website (<http://stsl.ru>), but it doesn't belong to them: it is held in the Russian State Library (=RGB) in the collection of the old Moscow Spiritual Academy. The shelfmark of the manuscript is ф. 173.I, No 40, and *De Cibis* appears on folios ff.108v–120v." Unfortunately, I have discovered that at least in case of Methodius' quotation from Acts 15:29, Cleminson's translation does not correspond to the Old Church Slavonic source text: The source text does not mention "blood" as one of the prohibitions in the above quotation (and this was adequately translated by Bonwetsch) whereas Cleminson does mention "blood" in it. For this reason, I prefer to use the aforementioned Bonwetsch's translation in this dissertation.

<sup>240</sup> Methodius von Olymp, *I. Schriften* (ed. & transl. G.N. Bonwetsch) (Erlangen – Leipzig 1891) 295.

<sup>241</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 6.7 (GCS 27,434). The German text is presented as it stands in the book, in accordance with the old orthographic rules. Translation: "I think to make no burden for the Gentiles who turn to God, but to write to them that they keep themselves from the pollutions of pagans and of idols, and from fornication, and from what is strangled and from blood" (translation mine).

<sup>242</sup> Methodius von Olymp, *I. Schriften* (ed. & transl. G.N. Bonwetsch) (Erlangen – Leipzig 1891) 296.

*Es gefiel also dem heiligen Geist und uns, nicht auf euch zu legen eine größere Last, sondern nur, daß ihr euch enthaltet von allem Götzenopfer und Unzucht und Ersticktem.*<sup>243</sup>

This citation, although based in principle on an Eastern version, contains three different features from Acts 15:28-29a as found in NA<sup>28</sup>:

A) The words *πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπιανάγκες* are translated in a more generic way by “sondern nur” (but only).

B) Only 3 prohibitions are enumerated (abstaining from blood is omitted). It is hard to say what the origin of this omission is. Nevertheless, taking into account the presence of the blood consumption prohibition in Methodius’ quotation of Acts 15:20, it seems that the omission in question should be attributed to a copyist’s mistake rather than to a deliberate change at some stage of the text’s transmission process.

C) The order of the prohibitions has more in common with the order from Acts 15:20 than with the one found in Acts 15:29. Methodius’ free quoting from memory may be responsible for this fact.

This quotation is directly followed by a short comment of Methodius:

*Des heiligen Geistes aber und der Apostel Befehl, daß nicht die Heiden genötigt werden, das Gesetz Moses zu halten, sagt er („wird gesagt“?) zu denen, die zu fleischlich auf das Gesetz sehen, das der „Waschungen der Gefäße“ und „viele andere“ Beobachtungen hat.*<sup>244</sup>

We can infer from this text that Methodius makes a distinction between two ways of understanding and following the teaching of the Torah: the first one is “zu fleischlich” (“too carnal”, “too literal”) whereas the second

<sup>243</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 6.7 (GCS 27,435). Translation: “Holy Spirit and we did not want to put on you any bigger burden, but only that you abstain from all offerings to idols and from fornication, and from what is strangled” (translation mine).

<sup>244</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 6.8 (GCS 27,435). Translation: “But the command of the Holy Spirit and of the Apostles that the Gentiles do not need to observe the Mosaic Law he says (“is said”?) to these ones who perceive the Law containing a rule of cleaning vessels as well as other rules, in a too carnal way” (translation mine).

one which is not mentioned here explicitly, can be called spiritual. The decision of the Apostolic Council that Christians need not follow the Mosaic Law applies to this “too literal way”, but not to the spiritual observance. As regards the prohibitions, it seems that Methodius treated them as exceptions from this rule. It is, nevertheless, not clear from this short comment how exactly he understood these prohibitions and what level of normativity he ascribed to them.

However, in the following part of *De cibis*, we find Methodius’ statements which illuminate this problem. Methodius states, namely, that God has never commanded anything meaningless. Thus, according to him, the dietary law of the Old Testament was intended to dissociate Israelites from pagan cults and to test them if they would obey the law because, as Methodius states alluding to Luke 16:10, whoever is not obedient in small matters, will not care for greater matters, either and vice versa.<sup>245</sup> Methodius explains it more directly in the following words:

*Daher hat auch Gott zuerst wegen Speisen und Opfern Gesetze gegeben, und über andere sehr einfache Dinge ein Gesetz, nicht unwissend, daß „alles was in den Menschen eingeht, ihn nicht verunreinigen“ kann, sondern vielmehr in den Geringerem unsere Seelen lehren wollend, damit sie imstande wären, das Wertvollere völlig zu halten.*<sup>246</sup>

As we can see, Methodius treated dietary laws as an exercise in obedience, keeping simultaneously in memory the words of Jesus from Mt 15:11 that a human being cannot be polluted by food. It would be worthwhile to mention at this point Methodius’ illustrative analogy which is based on Hebr 10:1. Methodius explains that a shadow does not show us much what an image looks like and even less what real things are like. An image, on the

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<sup>245</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 7.4-5 (GCS 27,436).

<sup>246</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 7.6 (GCS 27,436). Translation: “That is why God first gave laws about food and sacrifices and a law concerning other very simple things. He was not unaware that all which comes into a human being, cannot make him unclean, but he wanted to teach our souls much more in the smaller things, so that our souls were able to observe the more precious things fully” (translation mine).

other hand, is based on the real shape of things it depicts, so it truly shows the reality. Now, the Mosaic Law is related to the Gospel in the same way a shadow is related to an image and the Gospel is related to the future life in heaven as an image is related to the real things it shows.<sup>247</sup> Accordingly, Methodius draws the following conclusion:

*Da dies so ist, müssen auch diese Speisegesetze Schatten sein „der Zukünftigen Güter“, welche das Evangelium aufgedeckt und geläutert hat, nicht so sehr zu sorgen um Speisen und über das, was gespaltene Hufe hat, als vielmehr um Gerechtigkeit und die geistliche Speise und um Handlungen der Menschenliebe. Denn was dort gespaltene Hufe, das ist hier ein tätiges und vernünftiges Leben.*<sup>248</sup>

We can see that, in Methodius' view, Mosaic dietary laws have allegorical meaning for Christians. A Christian observes them by taking care of the spiritual issues that they foreshadow, not by fulfilling them literally.<sup>249</sup>

Taking all this data into account, it appears that Methodius understood also dietary prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29 first and foremost as spiritual exercises for new Christians of Gentile origin. He might have condoned literal observance of these prohibitions (although it is not certain), but this type of observance was not a goal, but the way to teach converts some spiritual values, probably especially the value of monotheism and the value of human life.

As regards Methodius' understanding of fornication in Acts 15:20.29, nothing certain can be stated.

### Summary

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20; Acts 15:29.

<sup>247</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 7.7 (GCS 27,436-437).

<sup>248</sup> Methodius of Olympus, *De cibis* 8.1 (GCS 27,437). Translation: "Because it is so, these dietary laws must also be shadows of "the future goods", which the Gospel has uncovered and refined, not so much to care for foods and for what has cloven hooves, but rather for justice, spiritual food and acts of love of other people. For in place of cloven hooves there, we have here an active and reasonable life" (translation mine).

<sup>249</sup> Cf. L.G. Patterson, *Methodius of Olympus. Divine Sovereignty, Human Freedom, and Life in Christ* (Washington, DC 1997) 29-30.

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4 (Acts 15:20) and 3 (Acts 15:29).

D) Methodius' understanding of the prohibitions:

a) Abstaining from the pollutions of pagans and of idols / abstaining from offerings to idols: Probably a dietary law needed to be observed to teach new converts to shun all idolatry and worship one God only.

b) Abstaining from fornication: Abstaining from sexual immorality. It is not clear if he understood "fornication" prohibited by Jerusalem Council in broader or stricter way.

c) Abstaining from strangled animals: Probably understood as a dietary law which still needed to be observed literally to teach the new converts the value of life.

d) Abstaining from blood: Probably understood as a dietary law which still needed to be observed literally to teach new converts the value of life.

#### 4. The final redactors of *Pseudo-Clementine* literature

In point 4 and the next two points, we analyse the references to the prohibitions from Acts 15 in a number of pseudonymous writings from the early centuries of Christianity. We begin with *Pseudo-Clementine* literature which is a term used to denote two pseudonymous literary texts: *Clementine Homilies*<sup>250</sup> and *Recognitions*<sup>251</sup>. The process and time of their composition is disputed; according to Wehnert these works in their final form were probably written at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> cent. or at the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> cent.<sup>252</sup> Contrary to the title *Clementine Homilies*, this literary work, together with *Recognitions*, are narratives.<sup>253</sup> Nevertheless, both titles are not completely

<sup>250</sup> Κλημεντος των Πετρου επιδημιων κηρυγματων επιτομη: *Clem. Hom.* (GCS 42,23).

<sup>251</sup> *Clementina. Recognitiones*. Rufino interprete: *Clem. Rec.* (GCS 51,1).

<sup>252</sup> Wehnert, *Reinheit*, 146-147.

<sup>253</sup> More details about the literary genre of the *Clementines*: I. Czachesz, "The Clement Romance: Is It a Novel?", J.N. Bremmer (ed.), *The Pseudo-Clementines* (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 10; Leuven 2010) 24-35.

without merit as they hint at the central content of both texts: the preaching of the Apostle Peter.<sup>254</sup> The literary relationship between both *Pseudo-Clementines* is, in spite of extensive research, not sufficiently clear.<sup>255</sup> What can be said is that the contents of both works bear many resemblances due to the fact that they both can be considered recensions of the same much earlier literary text which, according to Bremmer, was composed around 220.<sup>256</sup> It is true that both recensions were most probably edited by different redactors whose views and methods of literary work were not identical hence Bremmer's postulate to study both works independently seems reasonable.<sup>257</sup> In spite of this, it seems to be justified to treat both works together for the purposes of this thesis as they are based on the same literary work, have a great of the plot in common and the differences stemming from the final redactors do not appear to be connected with the interpretation of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions.

The clearest reference to the prohibitions occurs in *Homily 7*. The Greek text in its closest reads as follows:

ἡ δὲ ὑπ' αὐτοῦ ὀρισθεῖσα θρησκεία ἐστὶν αὕτη· Τὸ μόνον αὐτὸν σέβειν καὶ τῷ τῆς ἀληθείας μόνῳ πιστεύειν προφήτῃ καὶ «εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν» βαπτισθῆναι καὶ οὕτως διὰ τῆς ἀγνοίας βαφῆς ἀναγεννηθῆναι θεῷ διὰ τοῦ σώζοντος ὕδατος, «τραπέξης δαιμόνων» μὴ μεταλαμβάνειν (λέγω δὲ εἰδωλοθύτων, νεκρῶν, πνικτῶν, θηριαλώτων, αἵματος), μὴ ἀκαθάρτως βιοῦν, ἀπὸ κοίτης γυναικὸς λούεσθαι, αὐτὰς μέντοι καὶ ἄφεδρον φυλάσσειν, πάντας δὲ σωφρονεῖν, εὖ ποιεῖν, μὴ ἀδικεῖν, παρὰ τοῦ πάντα δυναμένου θεοῦ ζωὴν αἰώνιον προσδοκᾶν, εὐχαῖς καὶ δεήσεσιν συνεχέσιν αἰτουμένους αὐτὴν λαβεῖν.<sup>258</sup>

<sup>254</sup> J. Wehnert, *Pseudoklementinische Homilien. Einführung und Übersetzung* (Kommentare zur apokryphen Literatur 1/1; Göttingen – Oakville, CT 2010) 29.

<sup>255</sup> Wehnert, *Pseudoklementinische Homilien*, 31.

<sup>256</sup> J.N. Bremmer, "Pseudo-Clementines: Texts, Dates, Places, Authors and Magic", Id. (ed.), *The Pseudo-Clementines* (Studies on Early Christian Apocrypha 10; Leuven 2010) 8.

<sup>257</sup> Bremmer, "Pseudo-Clementines", 2.

<sup>258</sup> *Clem. Hom. 7.8,1-2* (GCS 42,120). Translation: "And this is the service He has appointed: To worship Him only, and trust only in the Prophet of truth, and to be baptized for the remission of sins, and thus by this pure baptism to be born again unto God by saving water;



The above speech is attributed to Peter and forms a part of his preaching to the people of Sidon. Among a number of precepts mentioned in this text, some are very similar to the prohibitions enumerated in Acts 15:20.29. These precepts include abstaining from food offered to idols, from what was strangled, from blood and from impure life. It is noteworthy that immediately before and after the prohibition to eat strangled animals, two other types of a prohibited meat are mentioned: meat of an animal that died of itself and a meat of an animal torn by other animals. The latter two prohibitions are not found in any version of Acts 15:20.29 or 21:25. They are derived from the Pentateuch, namely from Lev 17:15 and Deut 14:21. This fact, however, does not mean that an author or a redactor of the Clementines or their *Vorlage* referred to an oral account or some unknown version of the Apostolic Council. Although this cannot be excluded, it is very improbable that at the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> or beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> cent. writers or redactors interested in Christianity are not familiar with at least one manuscript of Acts. Moreover, F. Stanley Jones argues persuasively that *Recognitions* 1 are literarily dependent on Acts,<sup>259</sup> which only corroborates the above assumption.

As far as the final redactor's understanding of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions is concerned, one hint in the above quotation is particularly valuable: In the text, as it stands, the proscriptions of food offered to idols, of meat of animals that died of themselves, were strangled or were captured by beasts and the proscription of blood are all regarded as manifestations of the same evil act rendered as partaking at the table of demons. This fact not only assures us about the final redactor's interpretation of these prohibitions as

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to abstain from the table of devils, that is, from food offered to idols, from dead carcasses, from animals which have been suffocated or caught by wild beasts, and from blood; not to live any longer impurely; to wash after intercourse; that the women on their part should keep the law of purification; that all should be sober-minded, given to good works, refraining from wrongdoing, looking for eternal life from the all-powerful God, and asking with prayer and continual supplication that they may win it": Transl. P. Peterson, ANF 8,269.

<sup>259</sup> F.S. Jones, "An Ancient Jewish Christian Rejoinder to Luke's Acts of the Apostles: Pseudo-Clementine *Recognitions* 1.27-71", *Semeia* 80 (1997), 223-245 (especially 239).

dietary rules, but also about the rationale behind the necessity of their observance: The had to be kept because failing to observe at least one of these dietary proscriptions would be tantamount to the act of a table fellowship with demons or, in other words, idolatry. With respect to the prohibition of πορνεία from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, it seems that it is expressed in *Homily 7* by the command μὴ ἀκαθάρτως βιοῦν which is located right after the above mentioned dietary rulings. This generic expression appears to be the redactor's way to indicate the necessity of abstaining from πορνεία and, moreover, it seems to show us his broad understanding of unchastity which must be shunned.

A very similar text to the one quoted above can be found in *Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions* 4.36. This part of the *Recognitions* is extant only in the Latin translation of Rufinus of Aquileia. It reads as follows:

*quae autem animam simul et corpus polluunt, ista sunt: participare daemonum mensae, hoc est, immolata degustare vel sanguinem vel morticinum quod est suffocatum, et si quid illud est quod daemonibus oblatum est.*<sup>260</sup>

This text shows us that the final redactor of *Recognitions* shared with the final redactor of *Homilies* the same view with regard to the interpretation of abstaining from food offered to idols, from blood and from what was strangled: These dietary proscriptions must be observed because their infringement would amount to partaking of the table of demons which is an act of idolatry that makes the one who commits it utterly unclean.

Apart from the above quotations, *Pseudo-Clementines* contain more texts which are thematically linked with the Apostolic Council's prohibitions and may be helpful for our analysis. One of these texts is found in *Homily 8*.

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<sup>260</sup> *Clem. Rec.* 4.36,4-5 (GCS 51,164-165). Textual note: Only one manuscript δ instead of *illud* reads *aliud*: Ibid.,165. For more information about manuscripts and transmission of the text see: Ibid., XVII-CXI. Translation: "And these are the things which pollute both soul and body: partaking of the table of demons, that is consumption of food offered to idols, of blood, of a dead animal which has been strangled and of whatever that has been offered to demons" (translation mine).

Once again, it is placed as a part of Peter's preaching. In this particular text, Peter presents the words of an angel sent by God to pass a message to demons. Here is the beginning of this message:

Τάδε δοκεῖ τῷ παντεπόπτη θεῷ μηδενὸς ἀνθρώπων ὑμᾶς κυριεύειν μηδὲ παρενοχλεῖν μηδενί, ἐὰν μὴ τις ἐκὼν\* ἑαυτὸν ὑμῖν καταδουλώσῃ προσκυνῶν ὑμᾶς καὶ θύων καὶ σπένδων καὶ τῆς ὑμετέρας μεταλαμβάνων τραπέζης ἢ ἑτερόν τι ὧν οὐ χρὴ ἐκτελῶν ἢ αἷμα χέων ἢ σαρκῶν νεκρῶν γευόμενος\* ἢ θηρίου λειψάνου ἢ τμητοῦ ἢ πνικτοῦ ἢ ἄλλου τινὸς ἀκαθάρτου ἐμπιπλάμενος.<sup>\*261</sup>

This text enumerates some of the evil deeds which place human beings who commit them under the power of demons. Among these deeds there are some already mentioned in the previous quotations, such as partaking of the table of demons and consumption of what was strangled. Interestingly, the word αἷμα is explicitly mentioned this time not in connection with dietary practices but with shedding blood. The presence of the term *shedding blood* in vicinity of forbidden alimentary practices like eating carcass or what was torn or strangled may possibly suggest the final redactor's conviction about a link between these deeds: Whoever partakes of these types of food, is more prone to aggressive behaviour.

The next helpful text occurs in *Homily 7.4*. This relevant passage is a part of Peter's speech to the inhabitants of Tyre and reads as follows:

ἔστιν δὲ τὰ ἀρέσκοντα τῷ θεῷ τὸ αὐτῷ προσεύχεσθαι, αὐτὸν αἰτεῖν ὡς πάντα νόμῳ κριτικῷ διδόντα, «τραπέζης δαιμόνων» ἀπέχεσθαι, νεκρᾶς μὴ γεύεσθαι σαρκός, μὴ ψάυειν αἵματος, ἐκ παντὸς ἀπολούεσθαι λύματος. τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ ἐνὶ λόγῳ ὡς οἱ θεὸν σέβοντες ἤκουσαν Ἰουδαῖοι, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀκούσατε ἅπαντες ἐν πολλοῖς σώμασιν μίαν

<sup>261</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 8.19.1 (GCS 42,129). Textual notes: P (Codex Parisinus gr. 930) omits ἐκὼν. P reads γευομένων in place of γευόμενος. P reads ἐμπιπλώμενος [sic!] in place of ἐμπιπλάμενος; a scribe of P writes in the last mentioned word μ after the second π: *Ibid.*, XXIII,129. Translation: "These things seem good to the all-seeing God, that you lord it over no man; that you trouble no one, unless any one of his own accord subject himself to you, worshipping you, and sacrificing and pouring libations, and partaking of your table, or accomplishing anything else that they ought not, or shedding blood, or tasting dead flesh, or filling themselves with that which is torn of beasts, or that which is cut, or that which is strangled, or anything else that is unclean": Transl. P. Peterson, ANF 8,274.

γνώμην ἀναλαμβάνοντες· Ἄπερ ἕκαστος ἑαυτῷ βούλεται καλά, τὰ αὐτὰ βουλευέσθω καὶ τῷ πλησίον.<sup>262</sup>

We see that in this text, Peter enumerates the deeds pleasing to God, among which we find dietary proscriptions thematically linked with the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. Especially noteworthy, however, is a presence of the Golden Rule among these deeds. Although this rule is thematically linked with some Western variant readings of Acts 15:20.29, this fact cannot be treated as an evidence of the final redactors' familiarity with a Western version of Acts. The fact that the rule is quoted in its positive, and not negative form as in the Western text, allows us to surmise that it was borrowed from sources different from the Western version of Acts.

Another thematically relevant text occurs in *Recognitions* and once again it is ascribed to the Apostle Peter:

*sed nos [daemones] non latent, scientes mysterium creaturae et quam ob causam daemonibus haec agere in praesenti saeculo permittatur, ut vel transformari eis liceat in quas volunt imagines, vel suggerere pravas cogitationes vel inserere se per cibos et potum sibi consecratum mentibus vel corporibus eorum, qui ex eo sumpserint.*<sup>263</sup>

In this text, we find another confirmation of the final redactor's understanding of the meaning and normativity of abstaining from food offered to idols. The final redactor is convinced that a person who consumes this type of food allows demons to take control over himself / herself. Accordingly,

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<sup>262</sup> *Clem. Hom.* 7.4,2 (GCS 42,118). Translation: "And the things which are well-pleasing to God are these: to pray to Him, to ask from Him, recognising that He is the giver of all things, and gives with discriminating law; to abstain from the table of devils, not to taste dead flesh, not to touch blood; to be washed from all pollution; and the rest in one word,— as the God-fearing Jews have heard, do you also hear, and be of one mind in many bodies; let each man be minded to do to his neighbour those good things he wishes for himself": Transl. P. Peterson, ANF 8,268.

<sup>263</sup> *Clem. Rec.* 4.19,5-6 (GCS 51,156). Translation: "But they [demons] are not concealed from us, who know the mysteries of the creation, and for what reason it is permitted to the demons to do those things in the present world; how it is allowed them to transform themselves into what figures they please, and to suggest evil thoughts, and to convey themselves, by means of meats and of drink consecrated to them, into the minds or bodies of those who partake of it": Transl. T. Smith, ANF 8,139.

such consumption can never be practiced by a Christian. This conclusion applies to all dietary practices classified by *Clem. Hom.* or *Clem. Rec.* as partaking of the table of demons. These practices which have been enumerated in a number of quotations above involve consumption of blood and of what was strangled.

As far as abstaining from πορνεία is concerned, we find a very enlightening text in the pseudonymous *Clement's Epistle to Jacob*,<sup>264</sup> which is one of the two letters appearing at the beginning of *Clem. Hom.* This text reads as follows:

διὸ πρὸ πάντων περὶ σωφροσύνης φροντίζετε· λίαν γὰρ παρὰ τῷ θεῷ χαλεπὴ ὥρισται ἡ πορνεία. πορνείας δὲ εἶδη πολλά, ὥς καὶ αὐτὸς Κλήμης ὑμῖν διηγῆσεται· πλὴν πρώτη μοιχεία ἐστὶν τὸ ἄνδρα μὴ ἰδίᾳ μόνῃ χρήσασθαι γυναικὶ καὶ γυναῖκα μὴ ἰδίῳ μόνῳ χρήσασθαι ἀνδρί.<sup>265</sup>

This quotation appears to be the clearest text informing us how the final redactor of *Clem. Hom.* understood πορνεία. He states that there are many kinds of πορνεία and adultery is the first one he enumerates. It is, therefore, evident that the redactor had a rather broad understanding of behaviour denoted by this Greek word: This behaviour seemed to include all acts of sexual immorality and possibly also (although this is by no means certain) other deeds that could be metaphorically labelled as πορνεία. With regard to the normativity of the prohibition of sexual immorality, its absolute unacceptability can be inferred from a number of passages as well as from the overall message of both *Clem. Hom.* and *Clem. Rec.*<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ ΚΛΗΜΕΝΤΟΣ ΠΡΟΣ ΙΑΚΩΒΟΝ (GCS 42,5).

<sup>265</sup> *Ep. Clem.* 8.1-2 (GCS 42,11-12). Translation: "Wherefore above all things be careful about chastity; for fornication has been marked out as a bitter thing in the estimation of God. But there are many forms of fornication, as also Clement himself will explain to you. The first is adultery, that a man should not enjoy his own wife alone, or a woman not enjoy her own husband alone": Transl. T. Smith, ANF 8,219.

<sup>266</sup> Cf. for example *Clem. Hom.* 1.18; 3.28; 13.19-20 (GCS 42,32.66-67.202-203); *Clem. Rec.* 4.36 (GCS 51,164).

### Summary

A) Verses referred to: probably Acts 15:20 and Acts 15:29.

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4 (not present in all the references).

D) The Pseudo-Clementines' final redactors' understanding of the prohibitions:

a) Abstaining from offerings to idols: A dietary prohibition. Eating food offered to idols is a way of partaking of the table of demons, therefore, it can never be accepted.

b) Abstaining from blood: A dietary prohibition. Blood consumption is a way of partaking of the table of demons, therefore, it can never be accepted.

c) Abstaining from strangled animals: A dietary prohibition. Eating what was strangled is a way of partaking of the table of demons, therefore, it can never be accepted.

d) Abstaining from fornication: Prohibition of engaging in broadly understood sexual immorality, especially in adultery.

### 5. The final redactor of *Didascalia Apostolorum*

*Didascalia Apostolorum* (DA) is the next ancient pseudonymous writing to be analysed. It is a work composed from various sources by possibly two different redactors.<sup>267</sup> The date of its composition remains uncertain (maybe 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> century), but there is hardly any doubt that its final redaction took place in Syria (or Palestine).<sup>268</sup> DA was written in Greek; however, the text in its original language is not extant, except for a small fragment published by Bartlet in 1917.<sup>269</sup> It is true that the *Constitutiones*

<sup>267</sup> This is the new proposal of A. Stewart-Sykes (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum. An English Version with Introduction and Annotation* (Studia Traditionis Theologiae; Turnhout 2009) 6-7.22-29.

<sup>268</sup> Ibid., 49-55.

<sup>269</sup> J.V. Bartlet, "Fragments of the *Didascalia apostolorum* in Greek", *JTS* 18 (1917) 301-309.



and evil. It can also mean harm or envy. The word ܐܝܕܠܐ means simply idols. In the critical text of Vööbus, these two terms appear to be two separate prohibitions. There exists, however, an alternative variant of this phrase, found in the manuscripts E F G H I J K N<sup>274</sup>, which reads: ܐܝܕܠܐ ܕܐܝܕܠܐ (to depart afar from idols). As we see, words ܐܝܕܠܐ ܐܝܕܠܐ do not occur there, and thus we are subsequently left with one prohibition instead of two. Nonetheless, Vööbus' choice of the original Syriac reading seems to be preferable. Still, the question arises if the original Syriac translation renders Greek original of *DA* faithfully. It seems possible that the two aforementioned prohibitions have their origin in a Syriac mistranslation of the first prohibition from Acts 15:20: ἀπέχεσθαι τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων. Although there is no compelling evidence to accept this solution as certain or at least as very probable, the arguments in favour of this proposal are worth considering:

A) In the whole Bible, the noun ἀλίσγημα (pollution) occurs only once in Acts 15:20. A verb related to it, ἀλίσγέω, appears only five times in LXX, namely in Sir 40:29; Dan 1:8 (in the original LXX translation; in Theodotion's translation it appears twice); Mal 1:7 (2x); Mal 1:12. According to J. Thayer, none of these words occurs in other Greek writings.<sup>275</sup> Consequently, taking into account the scarcity of their occurrences, it seems quite possible that the translator of *DA* from Greek to Syriac, not being familiar with the proper meaning of ἀλισγημάτων, translated it using a generic term denoting evil and the following words τῶν εἰδώλων were translated as a separate prohibition.

B) The above mentioned expression does not occur in *DA*'s quotation of Acts 15:29, neither in Syriac nor in Latin version. It does not occur in *CA*, either. Should the author(s) / redactor(s) have treated the words translated

<sup>274</sup> E: Ms. Šarfeh Patr. 87; F: Ms. Midyat Gülçe 4; G: Ms. Harvard Harris 91; H: Ms. Mardin Orth. 321; I: Ms. Birmingham Mingana Syr. 4; J: Ms. Za'faran 2/1; K: Ms. Monserrat Orient. 31; N: Ms. Vatican Syr. 560B. More about these manuscripts in: A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. Chapters I-X* (CSCO 401; Louvain 1979) 22\*-40\*.43\*-45\*.

<sup>275</sup> J. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (1889), *BibleWorks*, v.8, 243.





...so that you abstain from what was sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from strangulation, and from fornication. Keeping away from these [things], you do what is good. Farewell.

In both Syriac and Latin versions of the quotation of v.29, the number, type and sequence of the prohibitions is in agreement with the biblical text of the Eastern tradition: First, abstaining from what is sacrificed (ܐܡܝܢܐ) <sup>281</sup> or, more explicitly in the Latin version, *ab idolis immolato* (from what is sacrificed to idols) is mentioned. Then we find abstaining from blood (ܐܡܝܢܐ / *et a sanguine*) and from what is strangled (ܐܡܝܢܐ) – the Latin version renders it as *et a suffocatione* (and from suffocation). The list of prohibitions is closed by abstaining from sexual immorality (ܐܡܝܢܐ / *et a fornicatione*). It is noteworthy that this last prohibition, which was not found in the Syriac version's quotation of Acts 15:20, is also omitted here by some Syriac manuscripts, namely by E F G H I J K N.

Since in *DA* there is no direct commentary on any of the aforementioned quotations from Acts 15, it is not easy to establish how the Apostolic Council's prohibitions were understood by the author(s) or redactor(s) of *DA*. Nevertheless, if we read the final version of *DA* from a synchronic perspective, we can find some information which would be helpful for our purposes:

A) *DA* makes a distinction between the Law and the Secondary Legislation. The Law consists of the Decalogue and God's ordinances given before the incident with the golden calf (*DA* 6.16.1). The Secondary Legislation, on the other hand, consists of obligations, purifications, sprinklings, immersions and distinctions between foods (*DA* 6.15.1). It was imposed on the Israelites as a punishment for the construction of the golden calf and for idolatry (*DA* 6.17.1).

<sup>281</sup> Manuscripts F G H K add initial ܐ (and) to the preposition ܐܝܢܐ: A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. Chapters XI-XXVI* (CSCO 407; Louvain 1979) 237 (all subsequent textual notes to this quotation come from the same page in this work).

B) Whereas the Law has been renewed, fulfilled and confirmed by Jesus Christ, the Secondary Legislation has been abolished (*DA* 6.17.1). Consequently, Christians, being free from the rulings of the Secondary Legislation, are free to eat food without making any distinctions between what is clean and what is unclean.

Thus, on the one hand, according to the Apostolic prohibitions, there are some kinds of food which Christians may not consume, on the other hand, however, the distinction between clean and unclean food is thought to have been abrogated so, consequently, everything may be eaten. There seem to be two solutions of this apparent dissonance:

A) The Apostolic Council's dietary prohibitions were considered to be temporary exceptions from the freedom of foods. The change of eating practices was not instantaneous, but needed some time to become fully appreciated by all. The decree issued to keep the above mentioned prohibitions was just the first step for experiencing the whole alimentary freedom in the future. Thus, when the time matured, these prohibitions would not have to be observed any more.

B) The Apostolic Council's dietary prohibitions were not a part of the Secondary Legislation observed temporarily for important reasons. They were instituted before the golden calf's incident, and as such, they were a part of the Law which was not abrogated. Therefore, they must be treated as a permanent exception from the rule of the freedom of foods.

With regard to other prohibitions, abstaining from blood was probably understood in a dietary sense as well – at least the presence of a regulation to shun strangled animals strongly suggests such interpretation. As to abstaining from sexual immorality, the phenomenon of its absence in the *DA*'s quotation of Acts 15:20 combined with its presence in the best Syriac manuscripts as well as in the Latin version of *DA*'s citation of Acts 15:29 pose a problem that remains unsolved. The meaning of this prohibition, in any

event, would probably be shunning all sexual activity outside marriage, as we can infer from other occurrences of ܠܡܥܠܐ and cognate words in *DA* (cf. chapters 22 and 23).<sup>282</sup>

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20 (no commentary); Acts 15:29 (no commentary).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations:

a) Acts 15:20: Eastern (with some peculiar features).

b) Acts 15:29: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions:

a) Acts 15:20: 4 or 5 (depending on interpretation).

b) Acts 15:29: 4 (in some Syriac manuscripts: 3).

D) *DA*'s understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ܠܡܥܠܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܕܝܢ ܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܕܝܢ : Taken separately as two different prohibitions it denotes abstaining from wickedness and from idols. If understood as a Greek-to-Syriac mistranslation of the first prohibition from Acts 15:20, the meaning would be abstaining from the pollution of idols, i.e., all types of idolatry.

b) ܠܡܥܠܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܕܝܢ (abstinere ab idolis immolato): Abstaining from food offered to idols.

c) ܠܡܥܠܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܕܝܢ (abstinere a sanguine): Probably abstaining from blood consumption.

d) ܠܡܥܠܐ ܕܡܝܢ ܐܝܕܝܢ (abstinere a suffocatione): Abstaining from eating strangled animals. It is not clear whether this and the above mentioned dietary prohibitions were understood as temporarily binding or permanently binding rules.

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<sup>282</sup> A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. Chapters XI-XXVI* (CSCO 407; Louvain 1979) 220-221. For English translations see: A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. Chapters XI-XXVI* (CSCO 408; Louvain 1979) 203-204; A. Stewart-Sykes, *The Didascalia*, 224-225.

e) *نفسه من الزنا* (*abstinere a fornicatione*): Shunning all extra-marital sexual activity.

## 6. The final redactor of *Constitutiones Apostolorum*<sup>283</sup>

Having analysed *DA*'s references to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions, we also need to examine a text closely related to *DA*. This text is known as *Constitutiones Apostolorum* (*CA*) and is a compilation of different ancient sources, edited in Antioch about the year 380 at the latest,<sup>284</sup> although this dating remains in dispute.<sup>285</sup> *CA* consists of eight books: the first six contain the modified and extended text of *DA* whereas Book 7 contains the modified and extended text of *Didache* (1-32)<sup>286</sup> as well as blessings of Jewish origin which were given Christian meaning (33-38),<sup>287</sup> texts about catechumenate with baptismal prayers (39-45), list of bishops appointed by the Apostles (46) and a collection of prayers (47-49). The last Book of *CA* consists mainly of the texts from the *Apostolic Tradition* and of the *Apostolic Canons*.<sup>288</sup> Although *CA*'s content comes from different sources whose authors may have had different understanding of a number of issues in Christianity, we, nevertheless, focus in this analysis on the synchronic reading of *CA* in its final form as we know it today. Accordingly, *CA* is examined here as one literary work with the goal of discovering its final redactor's understanding of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions.<sup>289</sup>

<sup>283</sup> The Greek title, according to Metzger's critical edition, reads: διαταγαὶ τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων διὰ Κλήμεντος (*Constitutions of the Holy Apostles by Clement*). Other variants of the title available in M. Metzger, SC 320, 100.

<sup>284</sup> M. Metzger, SC 320, 58-60.

<sup>285</sup> A. Baron – H. Pietras, SCL 2, XIII.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid., 173\*.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid., 195\*.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid., XIII.

<sup>289</sup> It appears that final redactor(s) of *CA* treated *CA* not as a loose collection of laws and regulations, but as a one work consisting of eight books. At the end of the *CA*, we find even

The quotations from Acts 15:19-20.28-29 can be found in Book IV which belongs to the part of *CA* based on *DA*. Still, there are some notable differences between the citations in the original Greek version of *CA* and *DA*'s text known to us in the Syriac and Latin translation. The citation of Acts 15:19-20 reads as follows<sup>290</sup>:

(1) διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἐπιστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν, (2) ἀλλ' ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν ἐθνῶν, (3) εἰδωλοθύτου καὶ πορνείας καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ.<sup>291</sup>

We see that, instead of *DA*'s abstaining from wickedness and from idols, *CA*'s quotation contains a slightly changed expression in comparison to the one found in *NA*<sup>28</sup>, namely ἀλισγημάτων τῶν ἐθνῶν (abstaining from the pollution of the Gentiles) instead of ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων (abstaining

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a claim that the *Constitutions* themselves are a part of the New Testament although "they should not be read in public because of the mysteries they contain" (οὐ χρὴ δημοσιεύειν ἐπὶ πάντων διὰ τὰ ἐν αὐταῖς μυστικά): 8.47.85 (SC 336,308). Already in Christian antiquity, *CA* has been identified as a pseudepigraphon, and for this reason, it was not accepted either by the Church in the East nor the Church in the West. Only in 691/692 at the Council of Quinisexta, the Church in the East accepted a small part of *CA*, namely so called *The Apostolic Canons* (ch.8), with the exception of Canon 85 containing a claim that *CA* is a part of the New Testament: A. Baron – H. Pietras, SCL 2, XIII-XIV.

<sup>290</sup> CA 6.12.13 (SC 329,332.334). Translation: "Therefore, I think that we should not make difficulties for Gentiles turning to God, but to instruct them to abstain from the abominations of the Gentiles, from food offered to idols, from sexual immorality, from blood and from any strangled animal" (translation mine).

<sup>291</sup> Textual notes: (1) Instead of κρίνω, ayz read ἔκρινα. In p, ἐγὼ precedes διὸ. Instead of ἐπιστρέφουσιν, ch reads πιστεύουσιν. Instead of ἐπὶ, yz read πρὸς. (2) Instead of ἀλλ' ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι, p reads εἰ ἀπέχοντε. In dv, ἡ occurs after ἀλλ'. Instead of ἐπιστεῖλαι, s reads ἀποστεῖλαι. ἀπέχεσθαι does not occur in s. Instead of ἀλισγημάτων, R reads ἀλογισμάτων. Instead of τῶν ἐθνῶν, p reads αὐτῶν πορνείας λέγω καὶ. Instead of τῶν ἐθνῶν, y<sup>mg</sup> reads αὐτῶν πορνείας λέγω καὶ εἰδώλων. (3) In ayz, the words καὶ πορνείας occur after πνικτοῦ. In p, καὶ πορνείας is omitted because it was mentioned earlier. M. Metzger, SC 329, 332-334. Abbreviations of manuscripts and editions: a: *Vaticanus gr. 839* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); b: *Vaticanus gr. 2088* (11<sup>th</sup> cent.); c: *Athous Vatopedinus 171* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); d: *Vaticanus gr. 1506* (year 1024); e: *Vaticanus gr. 2089 + 2115* (11<sup>th</sup> cent.); f: *Vaticanus Barberinianus gr. 336* (8<sup>th</sup> cent.); h: *Hierosolymitanus S. Crucis 3* (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> cent.); m: *Ambrosianus G 64 sup.* (13<sup>th</sup> cent.); o: *Bodleianus Miscell. 204* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); p: *Petropolitanus 100* (year 1111); s: *Atheniensis B. N. 1435* (12<sup>th</sup> cent.); v: *Vindobonensis Palatinus Hist. gr. 73* (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); y: *Vindobonensis Palatinus Hist. gr. 64* (16<sup>th</sup> cent.); z: *Parisinus B. N. rg. 931* (16<sup>th</sup> cent.). Families of manuscripts and editions: H (includes a c h y z); M (includes m p v); N (includes d e f s); R (includes b o). Other abbreviations: tx: in the text; mg: in the margin. See: M. Metzger, SC 320, 63-97.

from the pollution of idols). The word εἰδωλοθύτου, an equivalent of which also occurs in *DA*, is missing in *NA*<sup>28</sup>. Furthermore, in *CA*'s citation of Acts 15:20, abstaining from sexual immorality is mentioned among the prohibitions (it is omitted in a *DA*'s parallel citation) and the last two prohibitions are listed in *CA* in a reverse order to that found in *DA*'s quotation or in *NA*<sup>28</sup> together with the ancient Greek manuscripts of Acts supporting the Eastern variant. The last important difference between *DA*'s and *CA*'s citation of Acts 15:20 is the presence of a short one-sentence commentary on the quoted text in the latter work. Before we analyse it, however, let us examine *CA*'s quotation of Acts 15:28-29:<sup>292</sup>

- (1) ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν μηθὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν  
 (2) τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτου καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ  
 (3) πορνείας, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε. ἔρρωσθε.<sup>293</sup>

There are no substantial differences between the quotation above and the same quotation in the Syriac and the Latin version of *DA*. The text is also very close to *NA*<sup>28</sup>, the differences amount only to a word arrangement in v.28 and different grammatical forms of some words in v.29 (the words εἰδωλοθύτου and πνικτόν are in singular in *CA*, in contrast to their plural form in *NA*<sup>28</sup>).

<sup>292</sup> *CA* 6.12.15 (SC 329, 336). Translation: "For the Holy Spirit and we have decided not to lay on you any big burden, apart from what is necessary: abstaining from food offered to idols, from blood, from any strangled animal and from sexual immorality. If you keep away from these things, you will do well. Farewell" (translation mine).

<sup>293</sup> Textual notes: (1) Instead of μηθὲν in ayz d<sup>mg</sup>e<sup>mg</sup>, μηδὲν occurs in R ch d<sup>tx</sup>e<sup>tx</sup>s M. In s, there is a reverse order of the words ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν. Instead of ἐπιτίθεσθαι, ἐπιτίθεσθαι<sup>e</sup> occurs in e. (2) R ch omit the word τούτων. Instead of ἐπάναγκες, ἐπ' ἀνάγκαις occurs in a es. Instead of ἀπέχεσθαι, ἀπέχεσθε occurs in N, ἀπέχεσθαι<sup>e</sup> in c and ἀπέχεσθαι δὲ in ch. Instead of εἰδωλοθύτου, the plural form εἰδωλοθύτων occurs in H. Instead of αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ, R reads πνικτοῦ καὶ αἵματος. In p, καὶ between αἵματος and πνικτοῦ is omitted. Instead of πνικτοῦ, c reads πνικτῶν. (3) The word εὖ is omitted in s. Instead of πράξετε in R e, a<sup>ac</sup> v read πράξατε; s reads ἐπράξετε: M. Metzger (ed.), *Les Constitutions Apostoliques II* (SC 329,336).

Now, let us return to the short commentary placed after CA's quotation of Acts 15:20. It reads as follows.<sup>294</sup>

ἅπερ καὶ τοῖς παλαιοῖς ἦν νενομοθετημένα τοῖς πρὸ τοῦ νόμου φυσικοῖς, Ἐνῶς, Ἐνώχ, Νῶε, Μελχισεδέκ, Ἰὼβ καὶ εἴ τις τοιοῦτος ἐγεγόνει.<sup>295</sup>

It is evident from this short statement that CA's redactor(s) considered the prohibitions to be rules to be obeyed by all the righteous persons before the Mosaic Law was given. According to A. Baron and H. Pietras, natural law is meant here. This natural law is defined in CA 1.6.8-9:<sup>296</sup>

ἔστω δέ σοι πρὸ ὀφθαλμῶν γινώσκειν, τί νόμος φυσικὸς καὶ τί τὰ τῆς δευτερώσεως τὰ τε ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ τοῖς μοσχοποιήσασι δοθέντα ἐπείσακτα. νόμος γάρ ἐστιν, ἃ ἐλάλησεν Κύριος ὁ Θεὸς πρὸ τοῦ τὸν λαὸν εἰδωλολατρήσαι, τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἡ δεκάλογος.<sup>297</sup>

We see that in CA the natural law is identified with the Decalogue,<sup>298</sup> or, to be precise, with the contents of what later became known as the Decalogue. Consequently, it seems logical to conclude that CA's redactor(s) understood the Apostolic Council's prohibitions as rulings expressing only what has already been covered by the Ten Commandments.

<sup>294</sup> CA 6.12.13 (SC 329,334). Translation: "the norms which were established for the ancients, for the ones who lived before the law in a natural way, Enos, Enoch, Noah, Melchizedek, Job and others similar to them" (translation mine).

<sup>295</sup> Textual notes: Instead of παλαιοῖς, ayz read πάλαι and R reads ἀρχαίοις. In R, ἦν follows ἅπερ. Instead of ἦν νενομοθετημένα ayz ds M read νενομοθέτητο. Instead of νόμου, γ reads νόμον. In γ, the word λέγω is added after Ἐνῶς. Ἐνῶς is omitted by z. Instead of ἐγεγόνει, e<sup>tx</sup> reads ἐγένετο. In M, τότε is added to ἐγεγόνει and in R ἔτι. CA 6.12.15 (SC 329,334).

<sup>296</sup> A. Baron – H. Pietras, SCL 2,150.

<sup>297</sup> Translation: "May it be before your eyes so that you may understand what the natural law is and what pertains to the secondary legislation, [namely] the additions given to the makers of a calf in the desert. For the [natural] law consists of what the Lord God had said before the people committed idolatry, namely of the Decalogue" (translation mine).

<sup>298</sup> This text appears also in DA 2.9, nevertheless, the natural law is identified in it not only with the Decalogue, but also with other unspecified rulings called "judgements" (*iudicia*, ܐܕܝܥܝܐ): Texts in: E. Tidner (ed.), *Didascaliae Apostolorum Canonum Ecclesiasticorum Traditionis Apostolicae Versiones Latinae* (TUGAL 75; Berlin 1963) 6; A. Vööbus (ed.), *The Didascalia Apostolorum in Syriac. Chapters I-X* (CSCO 401; Louvain 1979) 18.



Still, the question arises about the exact meaning of each prohibition. It is easy to see a practical implementation of Ex 20:3 / Deut 5:7 in abstaining from the pollution of the Gentiles and from food offered to idols. Similarly, in case of abstaining from sexual immorality: there is a clear connection with Ex 20:14 / Deut 5:18. Abstaining from blood, however, is a different story: it might be connected with Ex 20:13 / Deut 5:17, nevertheless, the presence of strangled animals among the prohibitions would rather suggest the dietary understanding of both these rulings. Still, with what commandment could they be associated? No part of the Decalogue contains any dietary regulations. It is possible that blood and strangled animals consumption were seen by the CA redactor(s) as an act linked with idolatrous practices; if this were the case, these prohibitions would derive from the practical realization of Ex 20:3 / Deut 5:7.

Apart from texts containing clear references to Acts 15:20.29, CA contains some passages thematically related to the content of these biblical verses. These texts can be found in CA's ch. 7, in a part containing an extended version of *Didache*. In one of these fragments, we read:

Περὶ δὲ βρωμάτων λέγει σοι ὁ Κύριος· «Τὰ ἀγαθὰ τῆς γῆς φάγεσθε.» Καί· «Πᾶν κρέας ἔδεσθε ὡς λάχανα χλόης, τὸ δὲ αἷμα ἐκχεεῖς.» Οὐ γὰρ τὰ εἰσερχόμενα εἰς τὸ στόμα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, εἰς κοιλίαν γὰρ χωρεῖ καὶ εἰς ἀφεδρῶνα ἐκβάλλεται, τὰ δὲ ἐκπορευόμενα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, λέγω δὴ βλασφημίαι, καταλαλιάι καὶ εἴ τι τοιοῦτον.<sup>299</sup>

In this quotation, the freedom of foods is acknowledged, but not in an absolute form: Blood consumption is interpreted as an exception to this liberty, and it is not the only exception, as we read further in the next point:

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<sup>299</sup> CA 7.20.1 (SC 336,46). Translation: "With regard to foods, the Lord says this to you: 'You will eat goods of the earth' and: 'You will eat all meats like green plants, but the blood, you will pour out' because not what enters the mouth makes a man unclean, for it passes to the abdomen and is dropped into the latrine, but what goes out of [mouth], makes a man unclean, e.g., blasphemies, slanders and the like" (translation mine).

Ἀπὸ δὲ τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων φεύγετε· ἐπὶ τιμῇ γὰρ δαιμόνων θύουσι ταῦτα, ἐφ’ ὕβρει δηλαδὴ τοῦ μόνου Θεοῦ· ὅπως μὴ γένησθε κοινωνοὶ δαιμόνων.<sup>300</sup>

As we can see, food offered to idols is treated as another exception to the freedom of foods. This time, however, we are also given a rationale for such a treatment: Eating sacrifices to idols is considered to be closely connected with the worship of demons so it has to be shunned for this very reason.<sup>301</sup>

A passage thematically related to the Jerusalem Council’s prohibitions also occurs in the last eight part of CA. The canon which contains it reads as follows:

Εἴ τις ἐπίσκοπος ἢ πρεσβύτερος ἢ διάκονος ἢ ὅλως ἐκ τοῦ καταλόγου τοῦ ἱερατικοῦ φάγη κρέας ἐν αἵματι ψυχῆς αὐτοῦ ἢ θηριάλωτον ἢ θνησιμαῖον, καθαιρείσθω, τοῦτο γὰρ ὁ νόμος ἀπεῖπεν· ἐὰν δὲ λαϊκὸς ᾖ, ἀφοριζέσθω.<sup>302</sup>

First of all, the canon forbids eating “meat with blood of its life”. The expression κρέας ἐν αἵματι ψυχῆς, being a literal quotation from LXX’s Gen 9:4, clearly identifies the Noachic laws as a source of this prohibition. On the other hand, two other words, denoting meat of animals killed by other animals (θηριάλωτον) and meat of animals which died a natural death

<sup>300</sup> CA 7.21.1 (SC 336,46). Translation: “Nevertheless, flee from food offered to idols. They offer them for the worship of demons, and this is clearly manifested insolence against the only God. Do not become fellows of demons in any way” (translation mine).

<sup>301</sup> Interestingly, in the shorter version of *Didache*, as we know it, there is only a general advice with regard to foods that one should observe what he or she is able to. Food offered to idols is the only exception to this rule; no blood consumption prohibition is mentioned: *Didache* 6.3 (SCL 2,184-185).

<sup>302</sup> CA 8.47.63 (SC 336,298). Translation: “If a bishop or a presbyter or a deacon or anyone from the list of the clergy ‘eats meat with blood of its life’ or ‘meat of an animal caught by other animals’ or ‘an animal that died of itself’, he shall be deposed for the law forbids these things. If he is a layman, he shall be excommunicated” (translation mine).

(θνησιμαῖον) are taken from the Mosaic Law expressed in other parts of the Pentateuch.<sup>303</sup>

The severity of penalties (deposition, excommunication) imposed on Christians for not keeping the prohibitions from the text above seem to indicate the seriousness of these rulings. Nonetheless, these penalties are the most frequent among the ones stipulated in the canons from CA 8.47. We can even say that a deposition (and sometimes excommunication) for the clergy and an excommunication for the laity are the default penalties for almost every offence against the rulings contained in the canons and there are very few exceptions in this regard. Therefore, these penalties might have been treated by the final redactor of CA as sanctions for disobedience rather than for the content of any particular offence. Accordingly, the serious penalties of deposition and excommunication for eating blood and other forbidden things cannot be treated as a proof that the final redactor of CA considered these dietary rulings as immutable and perpetually binding.

Finally, with regard to the fourth prohibition from Acts 15:29, it is worthwhile to cite one more text from CA's ch.7:

Οὐ μοιχεύσεις,<sup>304</sup> διαιρεῖς γὰρ μίαν σάρκα εἰς δύο· «Ἔσονται γάρ, φησὶν, «οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν.» Ἐν γάρ εἰσιν ἀνὴρ καὶ γυνὴ τῇ φύσει, τῇ συμπνοίᾳ, τῇ ἐνώσει, τῇ διαθέσει, τῷ βίῳ, τῷ τρόπῳ, κεχωρισμένοι δέ εἰσιν τῷ σχήματι καὶ τῷ ἀριθμῷ. Οὐδὲ παιδοφθορήσεις· παρὰ φύσιν γὰρ τὸ κακὸν ἐκ Σοδόμων φυέν, ἥτις πυρὸς θεηλάτου παρανάλωμα γέγονεν, «Ἐπικατάρατος δὲ ὁ τοιοῦτος καὶ ἔρεϊ πᾶς ὁ λαός· Γένοιτο, γένοιτο.» Οὐ πορνεύσεις· «Οὐκ ἔσται γάρ, φησὶν, πορνεύων ἐν υἱοῖς Ἰσραήλ.»<sup>305</sup>

<sup>303</sup> Cf. Ex 22:30; Lev 7:24; Lev 11:40; Lev 17:15; Lev 22:8; Deut 14:21. Cf also Ez 4:14 and Ez 44:31. The Greek terms θηριάλωτον and θνησιμαῖον are LXX's equivalents for denoting MT's הִלְאָוֶת and פְּדֻשָּׁי respectively.

<sup>304</sup> Cf. LXX: Ex 20:13 / BHS: 20:14; LXX: Deut 5:17 / BHS: 5:18.

<sup>305</sup> Deut 23:18. The whole quotation comes from: CA 7.2.9-11 (SC 336,28.30). Translation: "You shall not commit adultery because [by doing this] you tear one body into two. For they will be, he says, two in one body. Husband and wife are united in nature, in agreement, in unity, in the disposition of property, in life and in the way of life, but they are different in physical appearance and in number. You shall not be a seducer of boys since it is a sin against nature which came from Sodom that became a ruin because of fire sent by God. Such a seducer is accursed, and the people will answer: 'Amen. Amen.' You shall not

In the above text, three terms related to different kinds of sexual immorality are used: μοιχεύω, παιδοφθοεύω and πορνεύω.<sup>306</sup> Taking the presence of these three verbs into account, we can assume that the latter term which is a verb deriving from the noun πορνεία is probably not used in its broadest sense (i.e. pointing at general sexual immorality) because it would be redundant to repeat the prohibitions already specified by the use of the verbs μοιχεύω and παιδοφθοεύω. Consequently, πορνεύω in this passage probably denotes the types of sexual immorality not denoted or represented in any way by the other two verbs. Although it is not certain that this more narrow meaning of πορνεία reflects the CA's final redactor's understanding of the fourth prohibition from Acts 15:29; it, nevertheless, seems to be the most probable option.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20 (with a short commentary); Acts 15:29 (without commentary).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations / references:

- a) Acts 15:20: Eastern (with some peculiar features).
- b) Acts 15:29: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions:

- a) Acts 15:20: 5.
- b) Acts 15:29: 4.

D) CA's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν ἐθνῶν: Abstaining from the pollution of the Gentiles, i.e. abstaining from idolatry.

b) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) εἰδωλοθύτου: Abstaining from food offered to idols as from one of the idolatrous practices.

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commit fornication. For there shall not be, he says, a fornicator among the sons of Israel" (translation mine).

<sup>306</sup> These terms have been taken from *Didache* 2.2 (SCL 2,176).

c) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) πορνείας: Abstaining from fornication probably in a narrower sense of the word, i.e. sexual immorality between the unmarried.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) αἵματος: Abstaining from blood consumption (possibly because of its association with idolatry). Blood consumption is an exception from the freedom of foods.

e) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) πνικτοῦ: Abstaining from eating strangled animals (this practice was possibly considered idolatrous). Eating strangled animals was most probably considered as an exception from the freedom of foods.

## 7. Council of Gangra

Some texts referring to the Eastern version of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions from Acts 15 can also be found in the documents produced by the Council of Gangra in Paphlagonia (Asia Minor). It is certain that this council took place in the 4<sup>th</sup> century; nevertheless, its more exact date is disputed: whereas some locate it around 340,<sup>307</sup> others conclude that the council probably took place about 355.<sup>308</sup> The council gathered to condemn some beliefs and ascetic practices of the supporters of Eustathius of Sebasteia. The supporters in question condemned marriage, kept fast on Sundays, disregarded married priests and did other acts not acceptable in the eyes of the council.<sup>309</sup> The document issued by the council members consisted of an introductory pastoral letter, 20 canons and a short epilogue. The introductory letter was directed to the bishops of Armenia.

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<sup>307</sup> A. Baron – H. Pietras (eds.), *Acta Synodalia ab anno 50 ad annum 381* (SCL 1; Cracoviae 2006) 123\*.

<sup>308</sup> T.D. Barnes, "The Date of the Council of Gangra", *JTS.NS* 40 (1989) 124.

<sup>309</sup> Baron – Pietras, *Acta Synodalia*, 123\*.

The reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions is found in Canon 2 whose title reads: *Περὶ τῶν βδελυσσομένων τὴν κρεωφαγίαν.*<sup>310</sup> Here is the text of this canon:

Εἴ τις ἐσθίωντα κρέατα, χωρὶς αἵματος καὶ εἰδωλοθύτου καὶ πνικτοῦ, μετὰ εὐλαβείας καὶ πίστεως, κατακρίνοι, ὥς ἂν διὰ τὸ μεταλαμβάνειν ἐλπίδα μὴ ἔχοντα σωτηρίας, ἀνάθεμα ᾖ. <sup>311</sup>

It seems that the text of the above regulation mentions consumption of blood, food offered to idols and meat of strangled animals only incidentally. The regulation is directed against an individual who would claim that someone can exclude himself from “the hope of salvation” simply by eating meat, even if he eats it “piously and with faith”. The council clearly opposes a notion that eating meat is in principle wrong. Nevertheless, as is clear from the text above, our three dietary prohibitions are exceptions to this rule. If therefore, an individual accused someone of committing serious offence not by eating meat in general, but by eating the meat which was offered to idols or came from a strangled animal and contains blood, such an accusation would be considered valid. Accordingly, it appears that the Council of Gangra, even if it does not excommunicate anyone for the consumption of blood, idol sacrifices or strangled animals, holds these dietary prohibitions as valid and necessary to observe.

As regards the prohibition of *πορνεία*, it is not enumerated together with the other prohibitions in Canon 2 probably because it does not fit thematically in the dietary context of this ruling. Nonetheless, it can be reasonably assumed that the members of the Council of Gangra knew this prohibition as well and understood it as denoting sexual immorality, whether in general or some specific type of it. The wish they express in the last words

<sup>310</sup> Ibid., 125. Translation: “About individuals who abhor eating meat” (translation mine).

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 125. Translation: “If anyone condemned a person who piously and with faith have eaten meat, except blood, food offered to idols and strangled animals, claiming that because of such an act this person does not have the hope of salvation, let him be excommunicated” (translation mine).

of the document, praying that everything transmitted to the Church by the Holy Scripture and apostolic tradition may be kept,<sup>312</sup> can be treated as a hint at their familiarity with the Bible, and thus also with Acts 15.

Summary:

- A) Verses referred to: Most probably Acts 15:29.
- B) Textual version of the biblical reference: Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 3.
- D) Council of Gangra's understanding of the prohibitions:
  - a) [ἀπέχεσθαι] αἵματος: A dietary rule prohibiting consumption of blood.
  - b) [ἀπέχεσθαι] εἰδωλοθύτου: A dietary rule prohibiting consumption of offerings to idols.
  - c) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πνικτοῦ: A dietary rule prohibiting consumption of strangled animals.
  - d) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πορνείας: Lack of exact data.

#### 8. Author(s) of *Canons of Pamphilus from the Apostolic Council of Antioch*

*Canons of Pamphilus* are another short text containing a reference to the Eastern version of the prohibitions. According to Harnack, these canons were not written by Pamphilus of Caesarea, but were ascribed to him by their compiler near the end of 4<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>313</sup> The reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions is found in Canon 9. In its quotation given below it is preceded by the part of the preamble from point 1 as its nearer context:

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<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>313</sup> F.J. Bacchus, "St. Pamphilus of Caesarea", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* 11 (New York 1911), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/11436b.htm> (accessed on 18.10.2016). Bacchus states that A. von Harnack, *Spread of Christianity* I, 86-101 is the source of this information.

συννοδεύσαντες οὖν οἱ ἀπόστολοι ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ τῆς Συρίας ἐχρημάτισαν (...) τοῦ μὴ φαγεῖν χριστιανὸν αἷμα, ἀλλ' «ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας».<sup>314</sup>

As we can see, the prohibition of eating food offered to idols is not mentioned in the above ruling although all the other Apostolic Council's prohibitions are enumerated. It is possible that the omission of this proscription was a result of the content of the preceding Canon 4 which deals with the question of idolatry.<sup>315</sup> The prohibitions of eating blood and of eating strangled animals seem to be exceptions from the freedom of food which is clearly stipulated in Canon 5.<sup>316</sup> As regards πορνεία, it is not defined in more clear terms.

It is noteworthy that in the last canon of this collection (Canon 10) a reference is made to 85 canons which form the last part of the Apostolic Constitutions (CA). As one of these 85 canons<sup>317</sup> stipulates severe sanctions for eating blood and strangled animals (deposition for clergy, excommunication for laity), we can conclude that the authors or compiler of the Canons of Pamphilus fully supported the serious negative assessment of these actions and penalties for them.

Summary:

- A) Verses referred to: Probably Acts 15:29.
- B) Textual version of the biblical reference: Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 3.
- D) Compiler of Canons of Pamphilus' understanding of the prohibitions:
  - a) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: A dietary rule prohibiting consumption of blood. A hint at the canon in CA containing severe penalties for

<sup>314</sup> *Can. Pamph.* 1,9 (SCL 2,294-295). Translation: "When the apostles assembled in Antioch of Syria they decided that a Christian should not eat blood, but abstain from blood, from what is strangled and from sexual immorality" (translation mine).

<sup>315</sup> *Can. Pamph.* 4 (SCL 2,294).

<sup>316</sup> *Can. Pamph.* 5 (SCL 2,295).

<sup>317</sup> Canon 63 which was already quoted in a section of this work dedicated to CA.



breaking this rule testifies to the compiler's conviction of a seriousness of the issue.

b) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πνικτοῦ: A dietary rule prohibiting consumption of strangled animals. A hint at the canon in CA containing serious penalties for breaking this rule testifies to the compiler's conviction of a seriousness of the issue.

c) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πορνείας: Abstaining from sexual immorality (it is not clear if this was understood in broader or stricter sense).

## 9. Epiphanius of Salamis

Next, we shall analyse the references to the prohibitions in the writings of Epiphanius (born between 310 and 320, died 402), who was a bishop of Salamis (also known as Constantia) on Cyprus. He was a fervent polemicist and a writer.<sup>318</sup> His monumental work *Panarion* (Πανάριον), written between 374 and 377,<sup>319</sup> is the one in which we find a reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. This reference occurs within Epiphanius' comments on Nazoraeans whom he considered to be a sect believing in Jesus and his teaching but at the same time wishing to observe literally all the precepts of the Old Testament.<sup>320</sup> The text of the reference in its closest context reads as follows:

πῶς δὲ\* οἱ τοιοῦτοι δυνήσονται ἀπολογία ἔχειν, μὴ τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ ὑπακούσαντες τῷ διὰ τῶν ἀποστόλων εἰρηκότι τοῖς ἐξ ἔθνων πεπιστευκόσι «μὴ βάρος ἐπιτίθεσθαι πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας καὶ εἰδωλοθύτου;» πῶς δὲ οὐκ ἐκπεσοῦνται τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ\* χάριτος,

<sup>318</sup> Cf. A. Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie chez Épiphanes de Salamine* (Christianisme Antique 4; Paris 1992) 19.29.530. More about Epiphanius of Salamis, his life and literary activity can be found in the following book which is probably the latest major study dedicated to him: A.S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus. A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity* (Christianity in Late Antiquity 2; Oakland, California 2016).

<sup>319</sup> Pourkier, *L'hérésiologie*, 19.

<sup>320</sup> See Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 29.7.1-6 (GCS 25,329-330; NHMS 35,117-118).

λέγοντος Παύλου τοῦ ἁγίου\* ἀποστόλου ὅτι «ἐὰν περιτέμνησθε, Χριστὸς ὑμᾶς οὐδὲν ὠφελήσει», «οἵτινες ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσθε, τῆς χάριτος ἐξεπέσατε»;<sup>321</sup>

The text above is peculiar because even though it contains an Eastern version of the prohibitions, it enumerates the proscriptions in a bizarre order, beginning with abstaining from blood and from what was strangled and finishing with abstaining from fornication and from food offered to idols. This order is not found in any variant readings of the verses containing the Apostolic Council's prohibitions in NA<sup>28</sup>. Nonetheless, the above citation most likely refers to Acts 15:28-29 as is suggested by the expression μὴ βάρος ἐπιτίθεσθαι πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες which is found with some minor differences also in NA<sup>28</sup> version of Acts 15:28.

The quoted text and its closer context do not contain any information about Epiphanius' understanding of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions. Still, there are some other passages in *Panarion* which can provide relevant, though not exhaustive information in this matter. One of these texts, located among Epiphanius' statements concerning the schism of Melitius the Egyptian<sup>322</sup> reads as follows:

καὶ ἐπειδὴ τινῶν μὲν μαρτυρησάντων, ἄλλων δὲ τοῦ μαρτυρίου ἐκπεσόντων, καὶ τὴν ἀθεμιτουργίαν τῆς τῶν εἰδώλων θρησκείας πραξάντων, οἱ κατ' ἀνάγκην καὶ θυσιῶν ἐφήψαντο, παραπεσόντες οὖν καὶ θύσαντες καὶ παραβάντες προσῆλθον τοῖς ὁμολογηταῖς τε καὶ μάρτυσιν, ὅπως τύχωσιν ἑλέους διὰ μετανοίας.<sup>323</sup>

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<sup>321</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 29.8,6-7 (GCS 25,331). Textual notes: A correction in the manuscript Vaticanus 503 reads οὖν in place of δὲ. A manuscript Marcianus 125 reads χριστοῦ in place of θεοῦ. Marcianus 125 omits ἁγίου. A correction in Vaticanus 503 reads ἐξεπέσετε in place of ἐξεπέσατε: *Ibid.*, IX.331. Translation: "But how can people like these defend their disobedience of the Holy Spirit, who has told gentile converts, through the apostles, 'Assume no burden save the necessary things, that ye abstain from blood, and from things strangled, and fornication, and from meats offered to idols?' And how can they fail to lose the grace of God, when the holy apostle Paul says, 'If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing ... whosoever of you do glory in the Law are fallen from grace?': Transl. F. Williams, NHMS 35,119.

<sup>322</sup> See Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 68.1,1-11,8 (GCS 37,140-152; NHMS 36,315-325).

<sup>323</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 68.2,1 (GCS 37,141). Translation: "And since some had been martyred, but others had been deprived of martyrdom by committing the enormity of idol worship, those who had even been forced to partake of sacrifices once they had fallen

This citation contains information about a number of Christians who chose to worship idols in order to escape death. One of the idolatrous acts these Christians did under pressure is described by the expression οἱ κατ' ἀνάγκην καὶ θυσιῶν ἐφήψαντο. The last two words can literally be translated: “they touched sacrifices”. Nonetheless, such a translation would not reveal the exact identity of these Christians’ action. The verb ἐφάπτω when used in collocation with words denoting food means “I am tasting”, rather than “I am touching”. A very good example of this occurs in the 2 Macc 7:1 where the word ἐφάπτω in its infinitive present middle form ἐφάπτεσθαι collocates with ἀπὸ τῶν ἀθεμίτων υἰείων κρεῶν<sup>324</sup> and together with it means “to taste some unlawful pork”. In light of this example, the deed described as οἱ κατ' ἀνάγκην καὶ θυσιῶν ἐφήψαντο most likely involved consumption of sacrifices which Epiphanius seemed to regard as an act of idolatry. The word καί before θυσιῶν ἐφήψαντο which can be rendered in English as “even” appears to emphasize Epiphanius’s abhorrence to the practice of eating food offered to idols.

With regard to establishing Epiphanius’ interpretation of abstaining from blood and from what was strangled, there is no information that would illuminate his attitude. Still, as far as his understanding of abstaining from πορνεία is concerned, the following text from *Panarion* seems to be very revealing:

Πόθεν τοίνυν οὗτοι ἐψευδηγόρησαν αὐτῶν τὰ ῥήματα, παρενθέντες τὴν ἑαυτῶν μυθοποιίαν, φανταζόμενοι καὶ ὀνειροπολοῦντες τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα καὶ τὰ ὄντα τῆς ἑαυτῶν διανοίας διασκεδαννύντες; ἀλλὰ τὸ πᾶν τοῦ διαβόλου βούλημα ὃ ἐνεκίσσῃσιν ταῖς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ψυχαῖς, ἔστιν δὲ ἰδεῖν καὶ θαυμάσαι ὡς ἐν πολλοῖς μὲν ἀτοπήμασι τὸν ἄνθρωπον ἠπάτησε καὶ εἰς παρανομίαν κατέσπασεν, εἷς τε πορνείας καὶ μοιχείας καὶ ἀσελγείας, εἰδωλομανίας τε καὶ γοητείας καὶ

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away, and had offered sacrifice and committed the transgression, applied to the confessors and martyrs for the mercy of penance”: Transl. F. Williams, NHMS 36,316.

<sup>324</sup> Greek text taken from: *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum iuxta LXX interpretes* (ed. A. Rahlfs) (Stuttgart 1935), *BibleWorks*, v.8.

αίματεκχυσίας, ἄρπαγὰς τε καὶ ἀπληστίας, κυβείας τε καὶ ἀδηφαγίας καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα, οὐδαμοῦ δὲ πρὸ τῆς τοῦ Χριστοῦ παρουσίας ἐτόλμησεν εἰς τὸν ἑαυτοῦ δεσπότην φθέγξασθαι βλάσφημόν τινα λόγον ἢ ἄνταρσιν ἐννοῆσαι.<sup>325</sup>

The term πορνεία in the above text is used alongside two other terms denoting other types of sexual immorality: μοιχεία and ἀσέλγεια. This distinction, which also occurs in similar forms in other parts of *Panarion*,<sup>326</sup> may suggest that Epiphanius' understanding of πορνεία did not encompass the whole area of sexual immorality, but it was probably restricted to immoral acts between two unmarried persons.

There exists one more text which could be mentioned with regard to Epiphanius' understanding of the first and the fourth prohibition from Acts 15:29 (or, in accordance with the sequence occurring in his own aforementioned quotation, the third and the fourth one). The text appears in *Panarion* 50 and it is a quotation of Rev 2:20.21 which in Epiphanius' version reads:<sup>327</sup>

<sup>325</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 39.9.1-2 (GCS 31,78-79). Translation: "Why is it, then, that these people have spoken their false words, and mixed their own invention (with the truth) by imagining and dreaming what is not real as though it were, and banishing what is real from their minds? But the whole thing is the devil's idea, which he implanted in human souls. But it is amazing to see how he deceived man with many absurdities, and dragged him down to transgression, to fornication, adultery and incontinence, to madness for idols, sorcery and bloodshed, to rapine and insatiate greed, to trickery and gluttony, and any number of such things – yet never before Christ's coming did he venture to utter a blasphemy against his own master, or think of open rebellion": Transl. F. Williams, NHMS 35,260.

<sup>326</sup> Cf. Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 48.9.1 (GCS 31,230; NHMS 36,14); 59.4.8 (GCS 31,368; NHMS 36,105); 61.1.10 (GCS 31,381; NHMS 36,115); 61.4.6 (GCS 31,384; NHMS 36,117).

<sup>327</sup> There are some differences between the text of Rev 2:20-21 which is found in *Panarion* and the text of Rev 2:20-21 from NA<sup>28</sup>. The latter reads as follows: ἀλλὰ ἔχω κατὰ σοῦ ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ, ἡ λέγουσα ἑαυτὴν προφῆτιν καὶ διδάσκει καὶ πλανᾷ τοὺς ἑμούςς· δούλους πορνεῦσαι καὶ φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθута. καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον ἵνα μετανοήσῃ, καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.

ἔχω δὲ κατὰ σοῦ, ὅτι ἀφεῖς τὴν γυναῖκα Ἰεζάβελ ἀπατᾶν τοὺς δούλους μου, λέγουσαν ἑαυτὴν προφήτιν, διδάσκουσιν φαγεῖν εἰδωλόθυτα καὶ πορνεύειν. καὶ ἔδωκα αὐτῇ χρόνον μετανοῆσαι καὶ οὐ θέλει μετανοῆσαι ἐκ τῆς πορνείας αὐτῆς.<sup>328</sup>

The passage quoted above is a part of a letter “to the angel of the Church in Thyatira”, one of the seven letters which are found at the beginning of the Book of Revelation. In this text, the practices of eating food offered to idols and fornication are clearly labelled as deceitful teachings and are rejected. Epiphanius quotes it to refute the claims of a group that did not consider the Book of Revelation as authoritative. The whole context of his argument in which the above quotation is placed reveals that Epiphanius fully identifies himself with the negative assessment of the two practices mentioned in the citation.<sup>329</sup>

Summary:

- A) Verses referred to: Most probably Acts 15:29.
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 4.
- D) Epiphanius’ understanding of the prohibitions:
  - a) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: Lack of data.
  - b) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πνικτοῦ: Lack of data.
  - c) [ἀπέχεσθαι] πορνείας: Probably abstaining from sexual immorality between unmarried persons.
  - d) [ἀπέχεσθαι] εἰδωλοθύτου: Abstaining from eating food offered to idols (as a manifestation of idolatry).

<sup>328</sup> Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 51.33.7 (GCS 31,308; NHMS 36,65). Translation: “But I have against you that you tolerate that the woman Jezabel deceives my servants, calling herself a prophetess and teaching to eat sacrifices to idols and to commit fornication. I have given her time to repent, but she does not want to repent from her fornication” (translation mine).

<sup>329</sup> See Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion* 51.33.1-10 (GCS 31,306-308; NHMS 36,65-66).

## 10. Cyril of Jerusalem

Among two Cyrils whose works contain the references to the prohibitions from Acts 15, the writings of the bishop of Jerusalem (ca. 315-386) are chronologically earlier. Cyril of Jerusalem, a talented preacher, wrote his most famous work, *Catechetical Lectures* in 347. In the *Catecheses* 4 and 17, we find two instances of an explicit reference to the prohibitions from Acts 15. Let us begin with an analysis of the former one. In the words preceding the reference, Cyril explains that both eating food sacrificed to idols as well as condemning others for eating regular food and not fasting enough are unacceptable types of behaviour for a Christian. Having elucidated on the one hand Christian positive attitude to food and, on the other hand, the value of fasting, Cyril writes:

Ἀσφάλισαί σου τὴν ψυχὴν, μὴ ποτέ τι φάγῃς τῶν τοῖς εἰδώλοις προσενηχθέντων· περὶ γὰρ τούτων τῶν βρωμάτων, οὐκ ἐμοὶ νῦν μόνον, ἀλλ’ ἤδη καὶ τοῖς ἀποστόλοις, καὶ Ἰακώβῳ τῷ ταύτης τῆς ἐκκλησίας ἐπισκόπῳ σπουδὴ γέγονε· καὶ γράφουσιν οἱ ἀπόστολοι καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι πᾶσι τοῖς ἔθνεσι καθολικὴν ἐπιστολὴν προηγουμένως μὲν τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων ἀπέχεσθαι, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ αἵματος, καὶ πνικτοῦ. Πολλοὶ γὰρ τῶν ἀνθρώπων θηριώδεις ὄντες, καὶ κυνῶν δίκην ζῶντες, τὸ μὲν αἷμα λάπτουσιν, ἀγριωτάτων θηρίων τρόπον μιμούμενοι· τὰ πεπνιγμένα δὲ κατεσθίουσιν ἀφειδῶς.<sup>330</sup>

In this text, Cyril clearly refers to the Eastern version of the prohibition from Acts 15:29. He does not mention fornication most probably because his focus in this passage concerns only the question of eating. Particularly noteworthy is Cyril’s view on the normativity of the prohibitions he enumerates: He holds abstaining from food offered to idols as binding although he does not provide any reasoning in favour of it. The only

<sup>330</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 4.28 (PG 33,492). Translation: “Safeguard your soul, never eating of the things offered to idols. For, in regard to the meats, not only I, at this time, but before now, the Apostle also, and James, once the Bishop of this Church, have shown concern. For the Apostles and the ancients wrote a Catholic epistle to all the Gentiles, that they should *abstain* first of all *from things sacrificed to idols*, and then *from blood and things strangled*. For many men, being of savage nature and living like dogs, lap up the blood after the manner of the fiercest wild beasts, and eat their fill unsparingly of things strangled”: Transl. L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 61,133.

argument he mentions is the argument from authority: The Apostles and James, his predecessor as a bishop of Jerusalem took this ruling seriously, and this is a sufficient ground to observe it. Abstaining from blood and strangled animals, being understood in a dietary sense, is also binding, and this time some reasoning (though sounding a bit strained) is provided: a human being should not behave like unreasonable beasts which crave for such food.

Now, let us turn to *Catechesis* 17 where we find the full quotation of the prohibitions. This quotation is deeply embedded in the context of the Church's teaching about the Holy Spirit who is the main theme of the whole catechesis. The text quoted below is directly preceded by Cyril's explanation that the members of the Church have been freed from the observance of those commandments of the Mosaic Law which were "grievous to be born", "given for a season" and had a prophetic nature pointing to the good things in the future. The Bishop of Jerusalem also provides examples of such commandments: the ones concerning what is clean or unclean, meats, circumcision, sacrifices, sprinklings, new moons and sabbaths. Next, he mentions that the question of keeping such commandments was disputed in the very early Church and for this reason, Paul and Barnabas set on a journey to Jerusalem to settle this dispute.<sup>331</sup> Then we read:

οἱ ἐνταῦθα ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ὄντες ἀπόστολοι, πάντων μὲν τῶν νομικῶν καὶ τυπικῶν πραγμάτων, δι' ἐπιστολῆς ἐγγράφου, τὴν οἰκουμένην ἅπασαν ἠλευθέρωσαν. Οὐ μὴν ἑαυτοῖς ἔδωκαν τὴν αὐθεντίαν τοῦ τοιούτου πράγματος· ἀλλ' ὁμολογοῦσιν ἐγγράφως, ἐπιστέλλοντες· "ἔδοξε γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν, μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος, πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων, καὶ αἵματος, καὶ πνικτοῦ, καὶ πορνείας". δι' ὧν ἔγραφον τοῦτο δηλοῦντες σαφῶς ὅτι εἰ καὶ δι' ἀποστόλων ἀνθρώπων ἦν τὸ γραγὲν, ἀλλ' ἐξ ἁγίου Πνεύματος οἰκουμενικόν

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<sup>331</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 17.29 (PG 33,1000-1001). Translation: L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 64,113-114.

ἔστι τὸ διάταγμα· ὅπερ οἱ περὶ τὸν Βαρνάβαν καὶ Παῦλον λαβόντες, εἰς πᾶσαν τὴν οἰκουμένην ὠχύρωσαν.<sup>332</sup>

The quotation of Acts 15:28-29 in the passage above can be classified as an Eastern text (and is very close to the Majority type of Acts [M]).<sup>333</sup> The text of the whole excerpt emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit and his influence on the Jerusalem Council and their decisions. There is, however, no statement which would reveal Cyril's understanding of the prohibitions. In light of Cyril's comments directly preceding the quoted passage, it appears that, in general, the Bishop of Jerusalem treated the commandments of the Old Testament as not binding for Christians, holding, however, the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions as an exception from this rule.

Apart from the above-cited passages, other thematically connected texts from Cyril's catecheses would be helpful to have a better insight into his position on the prohibitions. We find such a text in *Cat.* 3, which is dedicated to baptism. We read:

Ὡςπερ γὰρ τὰ τοῖς βωμοῖς προσφερόμενα, τῇ φύσει ὄντα λιτὰ, μεμολυσμένα γίνεσθαι τῇ ἐπικλήσει τῶν εἰδώλων· οὕτως ἀπεναντίας, τὸ λιτὸν ὕδωρ Πνεύματος ἁγίου, καὶ Χριστοῦ, καὶ Πατρὸς τὴν ἐπίκλησιν λαβὼν, δύναμιν ἁγιότητος ἐπικτάται.<sup>334</sup>

<sup>332</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 17.29 (PG 33,1001). Translation: "...the Apostles who were here in Jerusalem by a public letter freed the whole world from all legal and typical observances. They did not attribute the authority in such an important matter to themselves, but they sent out a decree to this effect: 'For the Holy Spirit and we have decided to lay no further burden upon you but this indispensable one, that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from immorality'. They indicated clearly by what they wrote that though the decree had been written by men who were Apostles, it was from the Holy Spirit, and universal; Barnabas and Paul took this decree and confirmed it to the whole world": Cf. English translation of: L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 64,114.

<sup>333</sup> This is indicated by the presence of the forms τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων and πνικτοῦ which are characteristic markings for M.

<sup>334</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 3.3 (PG 33,429). Translation: "For just as the offerings on the pagan altars, though morally neutral in themselves, become defiled by the invocation of the idols, so contrariwise the plain water, after the invocation of Holy Spirit, and Christ, and Father, acquires a power of sanctification": Transl. L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 61,110.



The sacrifices to idols seem to be presented here as a type of an anti-sacrament in order to highlight the efficacy of simple water in the ceremony of baptism: As the invocation of idols changes simple offerings into polluted ones, so invocation of the Holy Trinity gives to simple water the power of holiness. We can conclude that in Cyril's view offerings to idols are contaminated and consequently must not be consumed by Christians.

A similar text can be found in the *Cat. Myst.* 1. In point 7 of this catechesis we read:

Ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ ἐν εἰδωλίοις καὶ πανηγύρεσι κρεμνόμενα, ἔσθ' ὅτε κρέα, ἢ ἄρτοι, ἢ ἄλλα τοιαῦτα μιανθέντα τῇ τῶν παμμιάρων ἐπικλήσει δαιμόνων, ἐγκαταλεχθῆναι ἂν τῇ τοῦ διαβόλου πομπῇ. Ὡς περ γὰρ ὁ ἄρτος καὶ ὁ οἶνος τῆς εὐχαριστίας, πρὸ τῆς ἁγίας ἐπικλήσεως τῆς προσκυνητῆς Τριάδος, ἄρτος ἦν καὶ οἶνος λιτός, ἐπικλήσεως δὲ γενομένης, ὁ μὲν ἄρτος γίνεται σῶμα Χριστοῦ, ὁ δὲ οἶνος αἷμα Χριστοῦ· τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον, τὰ τοιαῦτα βρώματα τῆς πομπῆς τοῦ Σατανᾶ, τῇ ἰδίᾳ φύσει λιτὰ ὄντα, τῇ ἐπικλήσει τῶν δαιμόνων βέβηλα γίνεται.<sup>335</sup>

This time, sacrifices offered to idols are contrasted with Eucharist. As we have seen, the motive of an anti-eucharistic dimension of εἰδωλοθύτα appeared already in the writings of Cyprian and other ancient authors. Cyril states once again that the invocation of demons makes the food, which is by nature clean, unclean and as a consequence such food must not be consumed by Christians.

As regards Cyril's understanding of πορνεία, the following text may be of help. This text occurs in Cat 4.26, right before Cyril's comments on eating and fasting in 27, followed by the first of the above-quoted texts containing a reference to the prohibitions. In it, Cyril writes:

<sup>335</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat. Myst.* 1.7 (SC 126,94). Translation: "The food, also, which is sometimes hung up in pagan temples and at festivals – meat, bread, and so forth – since it is defiled by the invocation of abominable demons, may be included in "the pomp of the Devil". For as the bread and wine of the Eucharist before the holy invocation of the adorable Trinity were ordinary bread and wine, while after the invocation the bread becomes the Body of Christ, and the wine his the Blood, so these foods of the pomp of Satan, though of their own ordinary food, become profane through the invocation of evil spirits": Transl. L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 64,157.

Καὶ οἱ μονόγαμοι δὲ τοὺς δευτέρῳ γάμῳ συμπεριενεχθέντας μὴ ἀποδοκιμαζέτωσαν· καλὸν μὲν γὰρ ἡ ἐγκράτεια καὶ θαυμάσιον, συγγνωστὸν δὲ καὶ τῷ δευτέρῳ γάμῳ προσελθεῖν, ἵνα μὴ πορνεύσωσιν οἱ ἀσθενεῖς. “Καλὸν μὲν γὰρ αὐτοῖς, ἐὰν μείνωσιν ὡς ἐγὼ”, φησὶν ὁ Ἀπόστολος· “εἰ δὲ οὐκ ἐγκρατεύονται, γαμησάτωσαν, κρεῖσσον γὰρ ἐστὶ γαμῆσαι, ἢ πυροῦσθαι”. Τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ πάντα ἐξοριζέσθω μακρὰν, πορνεία, μοιχεία, καὶ πᾶν τὸ τῆς ἀκολασίας εἶδος· τετηρήσθω δὲ τὸ σῶμα τῷ Κυρίῳ καθαρὸν, ἵνα καὶ ὁ Κύριος ἐπιβλέψῃ τῷ σώματι.<sup>336</sup>

This passage defends the Christians who, after the death of a spouse, marry for the second time. Even though in this text there is no explicit definition of πορνεία, the words portraying the second marriage as a protection against fornication (ἵνα μὴ πορνεύσωσιν οἱ ἀσθενεῖς) reveal that Cyril uses a noun πορνεία and a verb πορνεύω to denote sexual immorality between unmarried individuals. Enumerating πορνεία alongside μοιχεία (adultery) near the end of the above-cited passage only confirms the observation that for Cyril these two words denote a different type of sexual immorality and are not synonyms.

#### Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 (once referred to, once quoted).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 3 (in the reference), 4 (in the quotation).

D) Cyril's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων / τῶν εἰδωλοθύτων ἀπέχεσθαι: Abstaining from eating food offered to idols. This dietary prohibition as well as the ones mentioned in the subpoints below, are treated by Cyril as exceptions from freedom of foods. They have to be observed out of obedience to the

<sup>336</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem, *Cat.* 4.26 (PG 33,488-489). Translation: “Let not those who have been married only once find fault with those who have indulged in a second marriage. For, while continence is a noble and admirable thing, it is also allowable to enter upon a second marriage, that the weak may not commit fornication. For “it is good for them if they so remain, even as I”, says the Apostle. “But if they do not have self-control, let them marry, for it is better to marry than to burn” [1 Cor 7:8-9]. But let all other things be put far away, fornication, adultery, and every kind of licentiousness; and let the body be kept pure for the Lord, that the Lord also may respect the body”: Transl. L.P. McCauley – A.A. Stephenson, FC.NT 61,132.

apostolic authority. Such food is contaminated through the invocation of demons (eating it would be like participating in an anti-sacramental ritual).

b) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: Abstaining from eating blood in order not to imitate savage animals.

c) ἀπέχεσθαι πνικτοῦ: Abstaining from eating what was strangled in order not to imitate savage animals.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι πορνείας: Abstaining from sexual immorality between unmarried people.

## 11. John Chrysostom

Before we analyse the works of the second Cyril from antiquity who gave evidence of being acquainted with the Eastern version of Acts, we need to focus on John Chrysostom who left us a very rich literary legacy pertaining to the topic of this thesis. John (born c. 347 in Antioch, died 407 in Commana in Pontus) was the Bishop of Constantinople and one of the most eloquent preachers in the early ages of Christianity. His soubriquet, ὁ Χρυσόστομος (the Golden-Mouthed), is the best description of the level of appreciation that his eloquence received from his audience.<sup>337</sup> It is precisely in the homilies of John Chrysostom where we find quotations from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 and his comments on these texts. Contrary to many of his contemporaries, John treats these texts, alongside other texts from Acts, as primary topics of his homilies which in great measure resemble exegetical commentaries.

Nevertheless, in spite of Chrysostom's rhetorical talents and clarity of exposition, his homilies on Acts, originally delivered about the year 400-401 in Constantinople,<sup>338</sup> are very difficult to understand in a number of places. This paradox, however, has a simple explanation: The homilies in question

<sup>337</sup> The oldest known source where this soubriquet occurs is *Constitution* of Pope Vigilius from the year 553: C. Baur, "St. John Chrysostom", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York 1910) <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08452b.htm> (accessed on 7.10.2015).

<sup>338</sup> Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 84.

were delivered orally by John Chrysostom, but not recorded by him in writing. This was done by fast writing scribes whose work did not always result in expressing the Patriarch's words accurately and faultlessly.<sup>339</sup> Consequently, it is not always easy to extract clear meaning from the written forms of Chrysostom's homilies available to us. This problem is aggravated by a lack of critical edition of a great number of Chrysostom's works, including his *Homilies on Acts*.<sup>340</sup>

Taking these difficulties into account, let us analyse the first verse of Acts which contains the prohibitions (15:20). This verse is quoted twice in Chrysostom's 33<sup>rd</sup> homily on this New Testament book. Its first quotation is cited jointly with Acts 15:19 and Acts 15:21 and they, together with the adjacent commentary, read as follows:

Διὸ ἐγὼ κρίνω μὴ παρενοχλεῖν τοῖς ἀπὸ τῶν ἐθνῶν ἀποστρέφουσιν ἐπὶ τὸν Θεόν, ἀλλ' ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος. Μωϋσῆς γὰρ ἐκ γενεῶν ἀρχαίων κατὰ πόλιν τοὺς κηρύσσοντας αὐτὸν ἔχει ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς κατὰ πᾶν σάββατον ἀναγινωσκόμενος. Ἐπειδὴ οὐκ ἦσαν ἀκεκοότες τοῦ νόμου, εἰκότως ταῦτα ἐπιτάττει ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἵνα μὴ δόξη ἀκυροῦν αὐτόν. Καὶ ὅρα πῶς οὐκ ἀφήσιν αὐτοὺς ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ταῦτα ἀκούειν, ἀλλὰ παρ' ἑαυτοῦ, εἰπὼν· Κρίνω ἐγὼ, τουτέστιν, ἐξ ἑμαυτοῦ, οὐχὶ παρὰ τοῦ νόμου ἀκούσας. Εἴτα λοιπὸν κοινὸν τὸ δόγμα γίνεται.<sup>341</sup>

<sup>339</sup> Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 84; E.R. Smothers, "Toward a Critical Text of the Homilies on Acts of St. John Chrysostom", *Studia Patristica Vol. I. Papers Presented to the Second International Conference on Patristic Studies Held at Christ Church, Oxford, 1955. Part I* (TUGAL 63; Berlin 1957) 53.

<sup>340</sup> Francis Gignac is currently working on the critical edition of John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Acts of the Apostles* which will be published in the CCG series: F. Martin – E. Smith (eds.), *Acts* (ACCS.NT 5; Downers Grove, IL 2006) XXI.

<sup>341</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.1 (PG 60,239). Translation: "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: but that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollution of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time has in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day": Transl. by J. Walker – J. Sheppard – H. Browne – G.B. Stevens, NPNF 1-11,206. "Since they had not heard of the (Mosaic) Law, it was reasonable for him to oblige them to observe these things derived from the law so that it would not seem that he denies the authority of the Law. And look how he does not let them hear these things from the Law, but from himself, saying, 'I think' which means 'on my own account, not because the Law so stipulates'" (translation mine).

The biblical text quoted above is almost identical with Alexandrian textual tradition, with the exception of an occurrence of the word ἀποστρέφουσιν in place of ἐπιστρέφουσιν. As regards an adjacent commentary, it is a little enigmatic, most likely due to the reasons already explained above. It appears that according to John Chrysostom, James of Jerusalem wanted to introduce the prohibitions in order to teach Christians of Gentile origin to show respect both to the Mosaic Law and to the people who still observed it. Nevertheless, on the other hand, James did not want to create an impression that the Mosaic Law in its entirety was still binding for all Christians. In other words, if this reading of Chrysostom's explanation is correct, James wanted to avoid two extremes: one was a possible contempt of non-Jewish Christians for the practices of the Mosaic Law still kept by Jewish Christians, the other one was a false assumption that every good Christian is obliged to keep all the precepts of the Mosaic Law. Thus, the prohibitions proposed in Acts 15:20 would be needed so that none of these extreme scenarios could materialize. Summing up, in the above mentioned passage, John Chrysostom expresses his opinion about the reason behind the Apostolic Council's decision to introduce the prohibitions.

We can find more of Chrysostom's insight in the comments surrounding his second quotation of Acts 15:20. First, he interprets the intention of James who in Chrysostom's view did not want to upset (ἀνατρέπειν) Christians of Gentile origin by obliging them to observe the rules which were too burdensome for them. Not taking this factor into account would, according to Chrysostom, amount to obstructing the plan of God who called these Gentiles to become Christians.<sup>342</sup> After this comment, we read:

Τί ἐστὶ, Κρίνω ἐγώ; Ἀντὶ τοῦ, μετ' ἐξουσίας λέγω τοῦτο εἶναι. Ἀλλ' ἐπιστεῖλαι αὐτοῖς τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι, φησὶν, ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων καὶ τῆς πορνείας

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<sup>342</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.2 (PG 60,241).

καὶ τοῦ πνικτοῦ καὶ τοῦ αἵματος. Αὗται γὰρ εἰ καὶ σωματικάι, ἀλλ' ἀναγκαῖαι φυλάττεσθαι, ἐπειδὴ μεγάλα εἰργάζοντο κακά.<sup>343</sup>

Quoting Acts 15:20 for the second time, John Chrysostom does not reveal his view as to the meaning of any of the four prohibitions explicitly. Nevertheless, he states that the prohibitions must be observed even if they are σωματικάί, because of the evil their non-observance generates. He does not specify what this evil exactly is. Moreover, from the text, as it stands, it is not clear if the term σωματικάί is applied to all the prohibitions or only to abstaining from strangled animals and from blood. Still, we can infer from the comment cited above that at least some prohibitions do not forbid actions seriously wrong per se: the use of εἰ καί (“even if”) before σωματικάί and the very meaning of this term (it describes prohibitions as pertaining to the body, not to the spirit, and thus can be regarded as of lower significance) seem to be a strong indication in favour of such a reading.

It is also worth mentioning how John Chrysostom comments on Acts 15:21 whose text and commentary directly follow the above-quoted passage. John understands this verse as an explanation why the letter containing the message about the prohibitions was sent to Christians of Gentile origin only: It happened in this way because Jewish Christians did not need such a letter. They knew about the prohibitions from the Books of Moses which they kept reading every Sabbath. Thus, as a consequence, it was not necessary to teach Jewish Christians about something they already knew. In this way, John Chrysostom admits that the Books of Moses are the source of these special proscriptions. He confirms his opinion in the words in which he states simultaneously that the very fact of requiring Christians of Gentile origin to

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<sup>343</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.2 (PG 60,241). Translation: “What does ‘I think’ mean? It signifies, ‘I am stating with authority that it is so.’ But send them a letter so that they may abstain, they said, ‘from pollutions of idols, from sexual immorality, from what is strangled and from blood’. These restrictions, even if pertaining to the body, were necessary to be observed since [actions contrary to them] were causing great evils” (translation mine).

observe these four prohibitions and not all the rules of the Mosaic Law, unbinds the Mosaic Law itself.<sup>344</sup>

Now, let us examine if it is possible to learn more about John Chrysostom's understanding of the prohibitions from his three references to Acts 15:29 in his 33<sup>rd</sup> *Homily* on this book. The first of them is presented together with the quotation of the preceding v.28. The citations (indicated by odd numbers) are intermingled with John Chrysostom's comments (even numbers):

(1) "ἔδοξε γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν." (2) Ἄρα οὐδὲν ἀνθρώπινον, εἰ Πνεύματι ταῦτα δοκεῖ. (3) "Μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος." (4) Πάλιν βάρος τὸν νόμον καλεῖ. Εἴτα καὶ ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τούτων ἀπολογεῖται. (5) "Πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας καὶ αἵματος, ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς, εὖ πράξετε." (6) Ταῦτα ἡ Καινὴ οὐ διετάττετο· οὐδαμοῦ γὰρ περὶ τούτων διελέχθη ὁ Χριστός· ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ταῦτα λαμβάνουσι. Καὶ πνικτοῦ, φησίν. Ἐνταῦθα τὸν φόνον ἀνείργει.<sup>345</sup>

The cited text of Acts 15:28-29 is close to the Alexandrian textual tradition.<sup>346</sup> The most notable difference lies in the peculiar order of the prohibitions which is not found in any ancient manuscript of Acts. One of the possible explanations of its existence is an activity of a scribe who recorded John Chrysostom's quotation of Acts 15:29 in this way without paying attention to the details.

<sup>344</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.2 (PG 60,241-242).

<sup>345</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.1 (PG 60,240). Translation: "'For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' — it is not man's doing, it says — 'to lay upon you no greater burden'— again it calls the Law a burden: then apologizing even for these injunctions — 'save these necessary things that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well.' For these things the New Testament did not enjoin: we nowhere find that Christ discoursed about these matters; but these things they take from the Law. From things strangled, it says, Here it prohibits murder": Transl. J. Walker – J. Sheppard – H. Browne – G.B. Stevens, NPNF 1-11,207.

<sup>346</sup> Differences between John Chrysostom's quotation and Alexandrian text of Acts (according to NA<sup>28</sup>): (1) "ἔδοξε : ἔδοξεν; τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι : τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ; (5) τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων : τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες; καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ πορνείας καὶ αἵματος : καὶ αἵματος καὶ φόνον καὶ πορνείας; εὖ πράξετε : εὖ πράξετε ἔρρωσθε.

In the commentary, John Chrysostom emphasizes first the validity of the decision of the Apostolic Council as well as its gentleness in dealing with Christians of Gentile origin. Next, we find Chrysostom's statement that the prohibitions were not taken by the Apostolic Council from the teaching of Jesus Christ, who, according to the bishop of Constantinople, did not tackle this issue anywhere, but from the Mosaic Law. Finally, Chrysostom's most original comment about the prohibitions appears: He states, without any further clarifications, that the prohibition of *πνικτόν* refers to the prohibition of murder. If we assume that a scribe recorded Chrysostom correctly on this point, it is the first time when this particular prohibition is understood in such a way. Since it seems impossible to achieve certainty in understanding what connection was found by Chrysostom between abstaining from what was strangled and murder, speculation about possibilities remains the only option. One of these possibilities can be formulated as follows: Meat of animals whose blood was not poured out was regarded by the bishop of Constantinople and possibly by his contemporaries as food which stimulates aggression. Consequently, by eating such meat one was more prone to commit violence up to the point of taking someone's life. Thus, the purpose of abstaining from what was strangled was to restrain murder.

The next, this time very vague and generic reference to Acts 15:29 in the aforementioned homily, reads as follows:

“Ἐδοξε τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν”, καίτοι ἤρκει εἰπεῖν, Τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι; τὸ μὲν, τῷ ἁγίῳ Πνεύματι, ἵνα μὴ νομίσωσιν ἀνθρώπινον εἶναι · τὸ δὲ, Ἡμῖν, ἵνα διδαχθῶσιν, ὅτι καὶ αὐτοὶ καὶ ἀποδέχονται, καὶ ἐν περιτομῇ ὄντες. “Μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι βάρος ὑμῖν.” Ταῦτα λέγουσιν, ἐπειδὴ πρὸς ἀνθρώπους ἀσθενεῖς ἔτι ὁ λόγος ἦν, καὶ πεφοβημένους αὐτούς · διὰ τοῦτο καὶ τοῦτο πρόσκειται. Δείκνυσι δὲ οὐχὶ συγκαταβάσεως ὄντα τὸν λόγον, οὐδὲ ἐπειδὴ ἐφείδοντο αὐτῶν οὐδὲ ὡς ἀσθενῶν · ἀλλὰ τὸναντίον· πολλὴ γὰρ καὶ τῶν διδασκάλων αἰδὼς ἦν · ἐκεῖνο γὰρ περιττὸν βάρος ἦν. Ὅρα βραχεῖαν ἐπιστολὴν οὐδὲν πλέον ἔχουσιν, οὐδὲ κατασκευὰς οὐδὲ συλλογισμοὺς, ἀλλ’ ἐπίταγμα<sup>347</sup> Πνεύματος γὰρ ἦν νομοθεσία.<sup>348</sup>

<sup>347</sup> In PG 60,242 it is noted that one unspecified manuscript contains a variant reading οὐδὲ λογισμοὺς, ἀλλ’ ἐπίταγματα in place of οὐδὲ συλλογισμοὺς, ἀλλ’ ἐπίταγμα.



As we can see, no quotation of Acts 15:29 occurs here nor do we find any explicit explanation of John Chrysostom's understanding of the prohibitions. The bishop of Constantinople emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic Council's decision as well as apostles' good-hearted, non-condescending kindness towards the Christians of Gentile origin. This kindness was clearly manifested in writing them a letter οὐδὲν πλέον ἔχουσιν "not having anything more" for them to observe from the old law than it was necessary.

Finally, the third reference to Acts 15:29 reads as follows:

Δείκνυσιν, ὅτι τὰ ἄλλα οὐκ ἀναγκαῖα, ἀλλὰ περιττὰ, εἵ γε ταῦτα ἀναγκαῖα. “Ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς”, φησὶν, “εὖ πράξετε.” Δείκνυσιν, ὅτι οὐδὲν αὐτοῖς λείπει, ἀλλ’ ἀρκεῖ τοῦτο. Ἡδύνατο μὲν γὰρ καὶ χωρὶς γραμμάτων, ἀλλ’ ὥστε νόμον εἶναι ἔγγραφον, ἐπιστέλλουσι. Καὶ πάλιν, ὥστε πεισθῆναι τῷ νόμῳ, καὶ ἐκείνοις ἔλεγον, καὶ ἐκεῖνοι τοῦτο ἐποίουν, καὶ μετ’ εἰρήνης.<sup>349</sup>

This is basically the reference to the second part of v.29 from Acts 15 which is quoted according to the unanimous Eastern textual witnesses (only

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<sup>348</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.3 (PG 60,242). Translation: “‘For it seemed good,’ say they, ‘to the Holy Ghost and to us’: not making themselves equal (to Him) – they are not so mad. But why does it put this (so)? Why did they add, ‘And to us,’ and yet it had sufficed to say, ‘To the Holy Ghost?’ The one, ‘To the Holy Ghost,’ that they may not deem it to be of man; the other, ‘To us,’ that they may be taught that they also themselves admit (the Gentiles), although themselves being in circumcision. They have to speak to men who are still weak and afraid of them: this is the reason why this also is added. And it shows that it is not by way of condescension that they speak, neither because they spared them, nor as considering them weak, but the contrary; for great was the reverence of the teachers also. ‘To lay upon you no greater burden’ – they are ever calling it a burden – and again, ‘save these necessary things:’ for that was a superfluous burden. See here a brief Epistle, with nothing more in it (than was needed), neither arts of persuasion (κατασκευὰς) nor reasonings, but simply a command: for it was the Spirit’s legislating”: Transl. J. Walker – J. Sheppard – H. Browne – G.B. Stevens, NPNF 1-11,209-210.

<sup>349</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 33.3 (PG 60,243). Translation: “It shows that the rest are not necessary, but superfluous, seeing these things are necessary. ‘From which if ye keep yourselves,’ it saith, ‘ye shall do well.’ It shows that nothing is lacking to them, but this is sufficient. For it might have been done also without letters, but that there may be a law in writing (they send this Epistle): again, that they may obey the law (the Apostles), also told those men (the same things), and they did this, ‘and confirmed them, and having tarried a space were let go in peace’”: Transl. J. Walker – J. Sheppard – H. Browne – G.B. Stevens, NPNF 1-11,210.

the last word is not quoted). Again we do not find any explanation of the meaning of the prohibitions, only their necessity is underlined.

Now let us analyse John Chrysostom's quotation and his subsequent comments on Acts 21:25 where the Apostolic Council's prohibitions are mentioned for the third time in the New Testament. These quotation and comment can be found in his 46<sup>th</sup> *Homily on Acts*. Here is the first reference to Acts 21:25 in this homily:

“Περὶ δὲ τῶν πεπιστευκότων ἔθνων ἡμεῖς ἐπεστείλαμεν, κρίναντες μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς, εἰ μὴ φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον καὶ τὸ αἷμα καὶ τὸ πνικτὸν καὶ πορνείαν.” Ἐνταῦθα ἐντρεπτικῶς. Ὁ δὲ λέγει τοῦτό ἐστιν· Ὡς περ ἡμεῖς ἐκείνοις ἐπετάξαμεν, καίτοι γε Ἰουδαίοις κηρύττοντες, οὕτω καὶ σὺ, καίτοι ἔθνεσι κηρύττων, σύμπραξον ἡμῖν.<sup>350</sup>

The peculiar character of the quotation of Acts 21:25 needs to be noted. The differences between the text of this verse quoted by John Chrysostom (as we find it in PG 60) and its text in NA<sup>28</sup> can be presented in three points:

A) John Chrysostom's quotation contains an addition between the words κρίναντες and τὸ φυλάσσεσθαι. The addition reads: μηδὲν τοιοῦτον τηρεῖν αὐτοὺς, εἰ μὴ and is found in the following NT manuscripts: D L 323 614 1241 ℣ gig.

B) NA<sup>28</sup> reads τό τε εἰδωλόθυτον whereas John Chrysostom's quotation τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον. Chrysostom's version is found in ℣<sup>74</sup> D Ψ 614 1505 2818.

<sup>350</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Acta* 46.1 (PG 60,322). Translation: "As touching the Gentiles which believe, we have written and concluded that they observe no such thing, save only that they keep themselves from things offered to idols, and from blood, and from strangled, and from fornication.' Here with a kind of remonstrance (ἐντρεπτικῶς), As 'we,' say they, commanded them, although we are preachers to the Jews, so do thou, although a preacher to the Gentiles, cooperate with us": Transl. J. Walker – J. Sheppard – H. Browne – G.B. Stevens, NPNF 1-11,278.

C) In John Chrysostom's quotation, both αἴμα and πνικτόν are preceded by τό. NA<sup>28</sup> does not list any manuscripts in which this feature would occur.

As we can see, the text of Acts 21:25 cited by John Chrysostom shows marks of different textual traditions: as regards the number of prohibitions, it is in agreement with  $\kappa$  B or  $\mathfrak{M}$ , but the additions mentioned in points 1 and 2, absent from  $\kappa$  and B are exactly the same as in D, and moreover, only the first one occurs in  $\mathfrak{M}$ , and only the second one in  $\wp$ <sup>74</sup>. Taking into account that John Chrysostom's version of this verse does not contain another major addition found in D,<sup>351</sup> it appears that  $\mathfrak{M}$  textual tradition is the closest one to his quotation.

As regards the meaning of the prohibitions, no explicit comment is found. Nevertheless, there is a possible hint as far as their validity is concerned. In a statement following the above mentioned citation, John Chrysostom expresses his understanding of the position of James and the Christian leadership team in Jerusalem with respect to what Paul needs to do in order to appease a possible uproar of the inhabitants of Jerusalem who heard that Paul was teaching the Jews not to observe the law. Now, as the Christian leaders in Jerusalem, in spite of being preachers to the Jews, accepted a compromise and gave a favourable command to the Gentiles so also Paul, a preacher to the Gentiles, shall make a compromise and make the inhabitants of Jerusalem see that he himself observes the law. It is possible to infer from juxtaposing these two situations that the necessity of the temporary observance of the law by Paul in Jerusalem is analogous to the necessity of the observance of the prohibitions by the Christians of Gentile origin which thereby can be regarded as having temporary validity as well.

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<sup>351</sup> This addition appears in place of ἡμεῖς and reads: οὐδὲν ἔχουσιν λέγειν πρὸς σέ ἡμεῖς γὰρ (cf. NA<sup>28</sup>).

Summing up all the above mentioned references and comments of John Chrysostom about the prohibitions, one cannot help noticing that information which we can extract from these texts about his understanding of the prohibitions is rather scanty. In order to expand our knowledge in this matter, we need to take into account other thematically connected writings of the Bishop of Constantinople. Fortunately, a substantial number of these illuminating texts is extant.

Let us begin from John Chrysostom's *Homilies on 1 Corinthians*. In *Hom. 1 Cor 20*, commenting on 1 Cor 8:1, he writes:

Πολλοὶ παρ' αὐτοῖς μαθόντες, ὅτι οὐ τὰ εἰσερχόμενα κοινοῖ τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἀλλὰ τὰ ἐκπορευόμενα, καὶ ὅτι τὰ εἰδῶλα, ξύλα καὶ λίθοι καὶ δαίμονες, οὔτε βλάψαι οὔτε ὠφελῆσαι δυνάμενα, ἀμέτρως τῇ τελειότητι τῆς γνώσεως ταύτης ἐκέχρητο, καὶ εἰς τὴν ἐτέρων καὶ εἰς τὴν ἑαυτῶν βλάβην. Καὶ γὰρ εἰς εἰδῶλα εἰσήεσαν, καὶ τῶν αὐτόθι μετεῖχον τραπεζῶν, καὶ μέγαν ἐντεῦθεν τὸν ὅλεθρον ἔτικτον. Οἳ τε γὰρ ἔτι τὸν τῶν εἰδῶλων ἔχοντες φόβον, καὶ οὐκ εἰδότες αὐτῶν καταφρονεῖν, μετεῖχον τῶν δείπνων ἐκείνων, ἐπειδὴ τοὺς τελειότερους ἐώρων τοῦτο ποιοῦντας, καὶ τὰ μέγιστα ἐντεῦθεν ἐβλάπτοντο (οὐδὲ γὰρ μετὰ τῆς αὐτῆς ἐκείνοις γνώμης τῶν προκειμένων ἦπτοντο, ἀλλ' ὥς ἐπ' εἰδωλοθύτων, καὶ ὁδὸς ἐπὶ εἰδωλολατρείαν τὸ πρᾶγμα ἐγίνετο) · αὐτοὶ τε οὗτοι πάλιν οἱ δὴθεν τελειότεροι, οὐχ ὥς ἔτυχεν ἡδικοῦντο, δαιμονικῶν ἀπολαύοντες τραπεζῶν.<sup>352</sup>

In this text, we observe a negative attitude of John Chrysostom towards eating food offered to idols in places dedicated to pagan worship. For many Corinthians who were practicing such consumption, it was simply a consequence of the words from Matt 15:11 as well as of the Christian

<sup>352</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 20.1* (PG 61,159). Translation: "Many among them [among Corinthians], having learned that 'not the things which enter in defile the man, but the things which proceed out,' (Matt 15:11) and that idols of wood and stone, and demons, have no power to hurt or help, had made an immoderate use of their perfect knowledge of this to the harm both of others and of themselves. They had both gone in where idols were and had partaken of the tables there, and were producing thereby great and ruinous evil. For, on the one hand, those who still retained the fear of idols and knew not how to contempt them, took part in those meals, because they saw the more perfect sort doing this; and hence they got the greatest injury: since they did not touch what was set before them with the same mind as the others, but as things offered in sacrifice to idols; and the thing was becoming a way to idolatry. On the other hand, these very persons who pretended to be more perfect were injured in no common way, partaking in the tables of demons": Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,111.

teaching about non-existence of idols. Chrysostom, while not denying these teachings, points out to a danger of leading individuals not yet well rooted in Christianity into idolatry. Apart from this fact, eating sacrifices in pagan temples equals partaking in the table of demons and it is therefore unacceptable for a Christian, even if idols have no power and all food is clean in its nature.

Further on, in the same homily, commenting on 1 Cor 8:4, the Bishop of Constantinople states:

Θέα εἰς ὅσῃν στενοχωρίαν ἐνέπεσε. Καὶ γὰρ ἀμφοτέρω βούλεται χατασκευάσαι, ὅτι τε ἀπέχεσθαι δεῖ τῆς τοιαύτης τραπέζης, καὶ ὅτι ἰσχὺν οὐκ ἔχει πρὸς τὸ βλάψαι τοὺς μετέχοντας· ἅπερ οὐ σφόδρα ἀλλήλοις συμβαίνοντα ἦν. Μαθόντες γὰρ ὅτι οὐκ ἔχει βλάβην, ὥς ἀδιαφόροις ἔμελλον ἐπιτρέχειν· χωλυθέντες δὲ αὐτῶν ἄπτεσθαι, πάλιν ὑπώπτεον ὅτι ὡς ἰσχὺν ἔχόντων εἰς τὸ βλάπτειν ἐκωλύθησαν. Διὰ δὲ τοῦτο καθελὼν τὴν τῶν εἰδώλων ὑπόνοιαν, αἰτίαν πρώτην τίθησι τοῦ ἀπέχεσθαι, τὰ σκάνδαλα τῶν ἀδελφῶν...<sup>353</sup>

In this interesting passage, John Chrysostom tries to shed some light on the question of two elements of Christian teaching that seemed contradictory: that eating the food offered to idols cannot harm a Christian, but that a Christian is nevertheless strongly required not to do it. According to John Chrysostom, this contradiction is illusory because the necessity of avoiding a scandal (defined as leading others to act against their conscience) proves that both elements of these teachings are compatible with each other. John names abstaining from scandalizing others as the first reason why a Christian must not eat food offered to idols even if this food is not unclean per

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<sup>353</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 20.2* (PG 61,162-163). Translation: "Look what a strait he hath fallen into! For indeed his mind is to prove both; that one ought to abstain from this kind of banquet, and that it hath no power to hurt those who partake of it: things which were not greatly in agreement with each other. For when they were told that they had no harm in them, they would naturally run to them as indifferent things. But when forbidden to touch them, they would suspect, on the contrary, that their having power to do hurt occasioned the prohibition. Wherefore, you see, he puts down their opinion about idols, and then states as a first reason for their abstaining the scandals which they place in the way of their brethren": Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,113.

se. He also provides an example of this type of scandalizing in his comment on 1 Cor 8:10:

Νῦν μὲν γὰρ ἐγγύς ἐστιν ἀποστῆναι τέλος τῶν εἰδώλων, φησί· σὲ δὲ ὁρῶν ἐμφιλοχωροῦντα ἐκείνοις, ἀντὶ παραινέσεως τὸ πρᾶγμα δέχεται, καὶ ἐναπομένει καὶ αὐτός. Ὡστε οὐ τῆς ἀσθενείας μόνον ἐστὶ τῆς ἐκείνου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς σῆς ἀκαιρίας ἢ ἐπιβουλή· σὺ γὰρ αὐτὸν ἀσθενέστερον ποιεῖς.<sup>354</sup>

We can get even more insight into John Chrysostom's understanding of abstaining from food offered to idols from his comment on v.13 of the same chapter 8. He states:

“Διόπερ εἰ βρῶμα σκανδαλίζει τὸν ἀδελφόν μου, οὐ μὴ φάγω κρέα εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.” Τοῦτο, ὡς διδάσκαλος ἄριστος, τὸ δι’ ἑαυτοῦ παιδεύειν ἃ λέγει. Καὶ οὐκ εἶπεν, Εἴτε δικαίως, εἴτε ἀδίκως· ἀλλ’ ὅπως οὖν. Καὶ οὐ λέγω, φησὶν, εἰδωλόθυτον, ὃ καὶ δι’ ἑτέραν αἰτίαν κεκώλυται· ἀλλ’ εἴ τι καὶ τῶν ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ καὶ συγκεχωρημένων σκανδαλίζει, καὶ ἐκείνων ἀφεξομαι...<sup>355</sup>

In this passage, John Chrysostom commends an attitude expressed by Paul, namely a willingness to resign from something morally neutral for the spiritual benefit of another human being. It is, however, worth noticing that the Bishop of Constantinople does not regard food offered to idols as belonging to this category since it must be shunned anyway for another reason. Thus, John Chrysostom acknowledges more clearly that avoiding scandalizing others is not the only reason in favour of observing the prohibitions although he does not explain what the other reason is.

<sup>354</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 20.5* (PG 61,167). Translation: “As thus: ‘At present,’ saith he, ‘a man is on the point of withdrawing himself entirely from all idols; but when he sees you fond of loitering about them, he takes the circumstance for a recommendation and abides there himself also. So that not only his weakness, but also your ill-timed behavior, helps to further the plot against him; for it is you who make him weaker’”: Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,116.

<sup>355</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 20.5* (PG 61,167). Translation: “‘Wherefore, if meat make my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for ever.’ This is like the best of teachers, to teach in his own person the things which he speaks. Nor did he say whether justly or unjustly; but in any case. ‘I say not,’ (such is his tone,) ‘meat offered in sacrifice to an idol, which is already prohibited for another reason; but if any even of those things which are within license and are permitted causes stumbling, from these also will I abstain’”: Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,116.

It is in one of his next homilies on 1 Cor where Chrysostom becomes more specific about it. In the 24<sup>th</sup> Homily, commenting on 1 Cor 10:20a, he presents his understanding of eating food offered to idols by means of an analogy:

Μὴ τοίνυν τρέχετε ἐπὶ τὰ ἐναντία. Οὐδὲ γὰρ, εἰ βασιλέως υἱὸς ἦς, εἴτα τῆς πατρικῆς ἀπολαύων τραπέζης, ἀφεῖς ἐκείνην, τῆς τῶν καταδίκων καὶ δεσμωτῶν ἡθέλησας κοινωνῆσαι ἐν τῷ δεσμωτηρίῳ, ἐπέτρεπεν ἅν ὁ πατήρ· ἀλλὰ καὶ μετὰ πολλῆς ἂν ἀπήγαγε τῆς σφοδρότητος, οὐχ ὥς δυναμένης τῆς τραπέζης βλάψαι, ἀλλ' ὥς καταισχυνούσης σου τὴν εὐγένειαν καὶ τὴν τράπεζαν τὴν βασιλικήν. Καὶ γὰρ καὶ οὗτοι οἰκέται εἰσὶ πτροσκεκρουκότες, ἡτιμωμένοι, κατάδικοι, δεσμῶται ἀφορήτω κολάσει τηρούμενοι, μυρίοις ὑπεύθυνοι κακοῖς. Πῶς οὖν οὐκ αἰσχύνῃ κατὰ τοὺς λαιμάργους καὶ ἀνελευθέρους, ὅταν θῶσι τράπεζαν οἱ κατάδικοι οὗτοι, τρέχων ἐκεῖ καὶ μετέχων τῶν προκειμένων; Διὰ δὲ τοῦτο ἀπάγω· ὁ γὰρ σκοπὸς τῶν θυόντων καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον τῶν δεχομένων ἀκάθαρτα ποιεῖ τὰ προκείμενα.<sup>356</sup>

Comparing a Christian to a king's son, John Chrysostom presents other reasons in favour of the necessity of abstaining from pagan sacrificial food:

A) Internal status of a Christian: Eating pagan sacrifices is a disgrace to a Christian because of his status of nobility as a member of God's family and his partaking of God's table.

B) External context of pagan sacrificial meals: Even if no food is unclean in its nature and a Christian knows it cannot harm him, still eating sacrificial meals in places of pagan worship is not allowed for a Christian due to idolatrous intentions of those who sacrifice (σκοπὸς τῶν θυόντων) and the

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<sup>356</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 24.3* (PG 61,201-202). Translation: "Do not then run to the contrary things. For neither if thou wert a king's son, and having the privilege of thy father's table, shouldest leave it and choose to partake of the table of the condemned and the prisoners in the dungeon, would thy father permit it, but with great vehemence he would withdraw thee; not as though the table could harm thee, but because it disgraces thy nobility and the royal table. For verily these too are servants who have offended; dishonoured, condemned, prisoners reserved for intolerable punishment, accountable for ten thousand crimes. How then art thou not ashamed to imitate the gluttonous and vulgar crew, in that when these condemned persons set out a table, thou runnest thither and partakest of the viands? Here is the cause why I seek to withdraw thee. For the intention of the sacrificers, and the person of the receivers, maketh the things set before thee unclean": Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,140-141.

presence of those who receive (τὸ πρόσωπον τῶν δεχομένων: John Chrysostom probably means demons here).

One more illuminating text of John Chrysostom on the matter of consumption of food offered occurs in his 12<sup>th</sup> *Homily on 1 Tm*:

Δύο τοίνυν τίθησι κεφάλαια, ἓν μὲν, ὅτι οὐδὲν κτίσμα κοινόν· δεύτερον δὲ, ὅτι εἰ καὶ γένοιτο κοινόν, ἀλλ' ἔχεις τὸ φάρμακον· σφράγισον, εὐχαρίστησον; δόξασον τὸν Θεόν, καὶ πᾶσα ἀκαθαρσία ἀπέπτη. Οὐκοῦν καὶ τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον, φησὶν, οὕτω δυνάμεθα καθαίρειν; Ἐὰν μὴ ᾔδεις, ὅτι εἰδωλόθυτόν ἐστιν· ἐὰν δὲ εἰδῇς λοιπὸν καὶ μεταλάβης, ἀκάθαρτος ἔσῃ, οὐχ ὅτι εἰδωλόθυτόν ἐστιν, ἀλλ' ὅτι προσταχθεὶς μὴ κοινωνεῖν δαίμοσιν, ἐκοινώνησας δι' ἐκεῖνου. Ὡστε οὔτε ἐκεῖνό ἐστι φύσει τοιοῦτον, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς προαιρέσεω; γίνεται τῆς σῆς καὶ τῆς παρακοῆς.<sup>357</sup>

Commenting on 1 Tim 4:4-5, John Chrysostom expresses his belief that all creation of God is good and this includes food as well. Moreover, he adds that even if food had become unclean, a Christian has a remedy of prayer which would make it clean again. Now, does it also apply to food offered to idols? Here John Chrysostom's answer is more nuanced: according to him, it depends on the awareness of a person about the provenance of food he/she wants to consume. If someone does not know that the food has been offered to idols, there is no ethical problem for such a person to eat this food. If someone knows it, however, and still eats food of sacrificial provenance, such an action is morally wrong because it is a violation of a direct apostolic command, not to communicate with demons (cf. 1 Cor 10:20). Thus, we find in this passage one more reason John Chrysostom has against eating pagan dietary offerings, namely obedience to the apostolic teaching.

<sup>357</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Tm* 12.1 (PG 62,559). Translation: "...therefore he [Paul] lays down two positions: first, that no creature of God is unclean: secondly, that if it were become so, you have a remedy, seal it, give thanks, and glorify God, and all the uncleanness passes away. Can we then so cleanse that which is offered to an idol? If you know not that it was so offered. But if, knowing this, you partake of it, you will be unclean; not because it was offered to an idol, but because contrary to an express command, you thereby communicate with devils. So that it is not unclean by nature, but becomes so through your wilful disobedience": Transl. P. Schaff, NPNF 1-13,445.



Finally, we need to mention John Chrysostom's 25<sup>th</sup> *Homily on 1 Cor* which, as a commentary to 1 Cor 10:25 – 11:1, is almost entirely dedicated to the question of eating food offered to idols. Apart from reiterating similar points already mentioned in his other homilies on this Pauline epistle, the Bishop of Constantinople clarifies in this sermon what sacrificial offerings Christians are allowed to eat. He writes:

Οὐδὲ γὰρ ἀνακρίνειν ἀφίησι, τουτέστιν, ἐξετάζειν καὶ πυνθάνεσθαι, εἴτε εἰδωλόθυτον, εἴτε μὴ τοιοῦτον· ἀλλ' ἀπλῶς ἐσθίειν ἅπαν τὸ ἐξ ἀγορᾶς, μηδὲ τοῦτο μανθάνειν, ὃ τι ποτέ ἐστι τὸ προκείμενον. Ὡστε ἔστι καὶ φαγόντα\* ἀγνοοῦντα ἀπηλλάχθαι. Τοιαῦτα γὰρ τὰ μὴ τῇ φύσει πονηρὰ, ἀλλ' ἀπὸ τῆς διανοίας ποιοῦντα τὸ ἀκάθαρτον.<sup>358</sup>

We see that a Christian may eat food offered to idols if its provenance is unknown to him. What is more, however, he does not have an obligation to investigate if the food he wants to consume has ever been sacrificed in pagan rituals; he can buy meat in the market without any preoccupation where it comes from and similarly, he can accept with peaceful conscience any food a Gentile wishes to offer him. The rationale behind this advice is a well-founded conviction that no food is unclean in its essence and pagan sacrificial acts do not change essence of any food. Nonetheless, food offered to idols, even if clean as to its nature, becomes unclean as to its use because of idolatrous intention of a person involved in pagan sacrificial ceremonies. It appears evident that for John Chrysostom a Christian who buys meat in the shambles and is ignorant about its sacrificial history, does not share idolatrous intentions of those who have offered such meat during pagan rituals, therefore such food may be consumed by him.

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<sup>358</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 25.1* (PG 61,205). Translation: "For he doth not even suffer them to "question;" i.e., to search and enquire, whether it be an idol-sacrifice or no such thing; but simply to eat every thing which comes from the market, not even acquainting one's self with so much as this, what it is that is set before us. So that even he that eateth, if in ignorance, may be rid of anxiety. For such is the nature of those things which are not in their essence evil, but through the man's intention make him unclean": Transl. T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,144.

It is also in John Chrysostom's 25<sup>th</sup> *Homily on 1 Cor* where the most comprehensive summary of reasons in favour of abstaining from food offered to idols can be found. Enumerating them all, it can be stated that pagan sacrificial offerings must not be consumed on the following grounds:

A) Due to [their] uselessness (διὰ τὸ ἀνόνητον)<sup>359</sup>. John Chrysostom probably means that eating pagan sacrificial food does not bring any spiritual benefit to a Christian. If a Christian is reviled because of his association with Christ, there is a spiritual gain attached to it, but being reviled because of pagan sacrificial food consumption does not bring any merit.<sup>360</sup>

B) Due to [their] excessive character (διὰ τὸ περιττόν): The Bishop of Constantinople does not explain it in detail. He probably refers to the association of pagan sacrificial meals with excessive eating and drinking.

C) Due to harm to a brother [in faith] (διὰ τὴν τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ βλάβην): John Chrysostom most likely means spiritual harm here, e.g. scandalizing others (influencing others to act contrary to their conscience).

D) Due to objection coming from a Jew (διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἰουδαίου βλασφημίαν): Eating food offered to idols would unnecessarily provoke Jews who were against such a practice.<sup>361</sup>

E) Due to reviling coming from a Greek (διὰ τὴν τοῦ Ἑλλήνος κακηγορίαν): A Greek (or broader: a Gentile) who finds out that a Christian, while being at the same time against offering sacrifices to idols, eats sacrificial food, may revile him as a hypocrite and a glutton.<sup>362</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> The reasons 1-7 are shortly enumerated in: John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 25.2* (PG 61,208). Translation: T.W. Chambers, NPNF 1-12,145.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 25.2* (PG 61,208).

<sup>361</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 25.2* (PG 61,208).

<sup>362</sup> Cf. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor 25.1,2* (PG 61,207).

F) Due to the necessity to shun fellowship with demons (διὰ τὸ μὴ δεῖν δαίμοσι κοινωνεῖν).

G) Due to the close association of this practice with idolatry (διὰ τὸ εἰδωλολατρείαν τινὰ εἶναι τὸ πρᾶγμα).

With regard to abstaining from blood and strangled animals, John Chrysostom presents interesting insights in his 27<sup>th</sup> *Homily on Genesis*. He writes:

Πλὴν κρέας ἐν αἵματι ψυχῆς οὐ φάγεσθε. Τί οὖν βούλεται τὸ εἰρημένον; τί ἐστὶ, Κρέας ἐν αἵματι ψυχῆς; Τοῦτ' ἐστὶ, πνικτόν. Τοῦ γὰρ ἀλόγου ἡ ψυχὴ τὸ αἷμα τυγχάνει. 5. Ἐπεὶ οὖν τὰς θυσίας ἡμέλλον ἐπιτελεῖν τὰς διὰ τῶν ἀλόγων, μονονουχὶ διδάσκει αὐτοὺς λέγων, ὅτι τὸ μὲν αἷμα ἐμοὶ ἀφώρισται\*, τὸ δὲ κρέας ὑμῖν. Ταῦτα δὲ ποιεῖ, ἄνωθεν προαναστελλὼν αὐτῶν τὴν ὁρμὴν τὴν περὶ τὴν ἀνδροφονίαν.<sup>363</sup>

We find in this passage a clear identification of God's commandment from Gen 9:6 with the prohibition of what was strangled. Furthermore, an explanation of the purpose of this proscription is also provided: It was introduced in order to restrain murders among human beings. Still, it is not entirely clear what in John Chrysostom's view was a connection between eating strangled animals and murder. Most likely he seems to believe that consumption of meat with blood by a human being stimulates aggression and willingness to fight, which in turn can lead to acts of homicide.

In another passage of the same sermon, John Chrysostom tackles the dietary nature of the Noahide law concerning blood of animals. He states:

Εἶδες ὅσον τὸ ἀνεπαχθὲς ἔχουσιν αὐτοῦ αἱ νομοθεσίαι; πῶς κοῦφαι καὶ ῥᾶδαι αἱ ἐντολαί; πῶς οὐδὲν βαρὺ οὐδὲ φορτικὸν ἐπιζητεῖ παρὰ τῆς ἡμετέρας φύσεως;

<sup>363</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen. 27.4-5* (PG 53,246). Textual notes: In place of ἀφώρισται, Savil. reads ἀφορίσατε: Ibid., 246. Translation: "But you may not eat flesh with the blood of soul. What do these words want to tell us? What is *flesh with the blood of soul*? This is what it is: strangled animals. For blood happens to be the soul of an animal. Now, as sacrifices of animals were going to be offered, he teaches them at that time: Blood is set apart for me, flesh is for you. He does these things to restrain once again their inclination for murder" (translation mine).

Λέγουσι γάρ τινες βαρὺ καὶ γεῶδες καὶ νοσοποιὸν εἶναι τὸ τῶν ἀλόγων αἷμα. Ἄλλ’ ἡμεῖς μὴ δι’ ἐκεῖνον τὸν φιλοσοφώτερον λόγον, ἀλλὰ διὰ τὴν τοῦ Δεσπότης νομοθεσίαν τὴν φυλακὴν ὀφείλομεν ἐκδείκνυσθαι.<sup>364</sup>

As we observe, in John Chrysostom’s opinion the Noahide law proscribing blood consumption is not difficult to keep because the blood of animals does not belong to the class of choicest food, on the contrary, its taste and its possible impact on health pose problems. It is noteworthy, however, that the Bishop of Constantinople emphasizes the necessity of observing God’s commandment out of obedience to God, not because of other reasons.

As to the words used by John Chrysostom in the very last sentence of this passage, Karl Böckenhoff thinks they are a clear proof that the Bishop of Constantinople held abstaining from blood as a rule still binding Christians in his time.<sup>365</sup> This conclusion seems to be justified, but not exhaustive. From all the data presented above, we can infer that, in Chrysostom’s view, abstaining from eating blood and strangled animals was introduced as one of the ways to safeguard human beings from committing homicide. Therefore, these dietary laws, even though still binding, can possibly be regarded as of minor significance.

Finally, as far as abstaining from πορνεία is concerned, no evidence is found that John Chrysostom understood this prohibition in a special narrow sense. From his use of this versatile term, no certain details can be inferred with regard to the exact meaning of the fourth prohibition, apart from its obvious semantic range of sexual immorality.

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<sup>364</sup> John Chrysostom, *Hom. Gen.* 27.5 (PG 53,246). Translation: “Can you see how God’s precepts have nothing burdensome in them? How light and easy are these commandments? How he does not demand from our nature anything heavy and wearisome? People say that blood of animals is heavy and earthy [in taste] and causes sickness. Nevertheless, we are bound to observe this command not for the sake of this more philosophical reason, but for the sake of the Lord’s order” (translation mine).

<sup>365</sup>“Daraus ergibt sich klar, daß Chrysostomus die Blutenthaltung auch für seine Zeit noch als verpflichtend ansah”: Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 86.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted or referred to: Acts 15:20 (2 quotations), Acts 15:29 (2 quotations, 1 reference), Acts 21:25 (1 quotation).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions:

a) Acts 15:20: 4 in every quotation.

b) Acts 15:29: 4 and 0 and 0 (no prohibition is mentioned explicitly).

c) Acts 21:25: 0 (no prohibition is mentioned explicitly).

D) John Chrysostom's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) τῶν ἀλισγημάτων τῶν εἰδώλων / ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων / φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὸ εἰδωλόθυτον: Eating sacrifices offered to idols should be shunned mainly for the following reasons: obedience to apostolic teaching, danger of scandalizing or provoking others, the close association of such practice with idolatry. Nevertheless, food offered to idols is not contaminated in its nature. Accordingly, a Christian has no obligation to investigate the provenance of meat bought in the market. An unaware consumption of food which was used as a pagan sacrifice, does no spiritual harm to a Christian.

b) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) (τοῦ) πνικτοῦ / φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὸ πνικτὸν: Shunning consumption of strangled animals. The goal of this dietary proscription was to restrain homicide, perhaps because this type of food was considered to stimulate aggression. John Chrysostom also emphasizes that obedience to God is the decisive factor in the observance of this prohibition.

c) ἀπέχεσθαι (ἀπὸ) (τοῦ) αἵματος / φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς τὸ αἷμα: See subpoint b.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι ἀπὸ (τῆς) πορνείας / φυλάσσεσθαι αὐτοὺς πορνείαν: Shunning sexual immorality (it is not clear if it is meant in a broader or a stricter sense).

## 12. John Cassian

John Cassian and Hesychius are two more authors whose literary works we shall analyse before we present the views of Cyril of Alexandria on the prohibitions. John (born ca. 360 in Scythia Minor, died ca. 435 in Massilia, Gaul) was a monk and a founder of a monastery in Massilia (modern-day Marseilles) in Gaul. Around the age of 60, having received a request from one of the bishops he wrote his two famous works: *De institutis coenobiorum* ("The Institutes of the Coenobia") and *Conlationes Patrum in scetica eremo* ("Conferences of the Desert Fathers"). In both of these works he explicitly refers to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions as described in Acts 15. The first of these texts, *Inst* 7.17, reads:

(1) *qui igitur sunt beatiores? utrumnam hi qui nuper de numero gentium congregati nec* (2) *praeualentes euangelicam perfectionem conscendere adhuc suis substantiis inhaerebant, in* (3) *quibus magnus fructus apostolo ducebatur, si saltem ab idolorum cultu et fornicatione et* (4) *suffocatis et sanguine reuocati fidem Christi cum suis facultatibus suscepissent, an illi qui* (5) *euangelicae satisfaciennes sententiae crucem domini cotidie portantes nihil sibi de propriis facultatibus superesse uoluerunt?*<sup>366</sup>

The arrangement of the prohibitions as well as rendering the first prohibition as *idolorum cultus*<sup>367</sup> indicate that the text quoted above comes from Acts 15:20. In this text, Cassian does not make any explicit comment as

<sup>366</sup> John Cassian, *Inst.* 7.17 (CSEL 17<sup>2</sup>, 142). Textual notes: (1) *hi* : *hii* G<sup>1</sup>H<sup>1</sup>; *nec* : *ne* L; (2) *euangelicam* : *euuangelicam* L; (3) *apostolo* : *ab apostolo* Hv; *saltem* : *saltem* H<sup>2</sup>; (4) *suffocatis* : *suffucatis* A; *sanguine* : *sanguinem* C; *suscepissent* : *suscipissent* H<sup>1</sup>; (5) *domini* : *χρῖ* H: *Ibid.*, 142. List of manuscripts and editions: A: *Augustodunensis* 24 (7<sup>th</sup> cent.); C: *Casinensis rescriptus* 295 (7<sup>th</sup> cent.); G: *Caroliruhensis, olim Augiensis* LXXXVII (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); H: *Parisinus* 12292 (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); L: *Laudunensis* 328 (until the 9<sup>th</sup> cent.); v: *editio Cuyckii* (1578) and *editio Romana* (1588): *Ibid.*, XXX-LXXVIII. Translation: "So who are the more blessed – those who have recently become converts from paganism, and are unable to attain to evangelical perfection, still relying on their own wealth, in which the Apostle promises them great rewards, since they have turned away from *the worship of idols, from fornication, strangled meat and blood*, and accepted the faith of Christ with all their property; or those who take up the challenge of the Gospel and carry the Cross of the Lord daily, wishing nothing of their own property to survive?": John Cassian, *The Monastic Institutes* (transl. J. Bertram) (London 1999) 117-118.

<sup>367</sup> This expression appears to render the meaning of ἀλισγίματα τῶν εἰδώλων from Acts 15:20 rather than the meaning of εἰδωλόθυτα from Acts 15:29.

regards the exact meaning of the prohibitions. He only notices that these prohibitions were minimal ordinances issued to be kept by the new non-Jewish converts because they were unable to shape their lives in accordance with the rules of evangelical perfection.

In the passage from the second of the above mentioned works we read:

(1) *sed cum apostolorum excessu tepescere coepisset credentium multitudo, ea uel maxime quae* (2) *ad fidem Christi de alienigenis ac diuersis gentibus confluebat, a quibus apostoli pro* (3) *ipsis fidei rudimentis et inueterata gentilitatis consuetudine nihil amplius expetebant nisi ut* (4) *“ab inmolaticijs idolorum et fornicatione et suffocatis et sanguine” temperarent, atque ista* (5) *libertas quae gentibus propter infirmitatem primae credulitatis indulta est etiam illius ecclesiae* (6) *perfectionem quae Hierosolymis consistebat paulatim contaminare coepisset, (7) et crescente cotidie uel indigenarum numero uel aduenarum primae illius fidei* (8) *refrigeresceret feruor, non solum hi qui ad fidem Christi confluxerant, uerum etiam illi qui erant ecclesiae principes ab illa districtione laxati sunt.*<sup>368</sup>

In this passage, as in the text of *Inst* quoted above, the prohibitions are enumerated according to the order found in Acts 15:20. Nevertheless, the expression denoting the first prohibition<sup>369</sup> as well as the immediate context of this biblical quotation indicate Acts 15:29 as a verse to which the reference

<sup>368</sup> John Cassian, *Coll.* 18.5.2 (CSEL 13<sup>2</sup>,510). Textual notes: (1) *cum apostolorum excessu* : *cum post apostolorum excessum* ORKv; *ea* : *et* K<sup>1</sup>; (2) *alienigenis* : *alieniginis* K<sup>1</sup>; (4) *suffocatis* : *suffocaticiis* R; *atque* : *adque* FR; (6) *Hierosolymis* : *hierusolymis* F : *in gerusolimis* R; *iherosolimis* O; (7) *cotidie* : *quotidie* O; *indigenarum* : *indignarum* K<sup>1</sup>; (8) *hi* : *hii* FORK: *Ibid.*, 510. List of manuscripts and editions: F: *Monacensis* 6343 / *Frisingensis* 143 (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); K: *Caroliruhensis, olim Augiensis* XCII (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); O: *Parisini* 2170 (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); R: *Vaticanus bibliothecae reginae Sueciae* 140 (9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> cent.); v: *editio Cuyckii* (1578) and *editio Romana* (1588): CSEL 17<sup>2</sup>,XXX-LXXVIII. Translation: "But at the death of the apostles, the multitude of believers began to grow lukewarm, especially those who came over to the faith of Christ from different foreign nations. Out of regard for their rudimentary faith and their inveterate paganism, the apostles asked nothing more of them than that they abstain *from things sacrificed to idols, from fornication, from things strangled, and from blood*. But this liberty, which was conceded to the pagans because of the weakness of their new faith, gradually began to spoil the perfection of the Church which was in Jerusalem, and, as the number of natives and of foreigners daily increased, the warmth of that new faith grew cold, and not only those who had come over to the faith of Christ but even those who were the leaders of the Church relaxed their strictness": Transl. B. Ramsey, ACW 57,637-638.

<sup>369</sup> An expression *inmolaticia idolorum* is one of the Latin equivalents of εἰδωλόθυτα.

is made and this seems to be the most probable choice.<sup>370</sup> Once again, Cassian provides no explicit comment with regard to his understanding of the exact meaning of the prohibitions; he only notes that they were rudimentary requirements given to new converts on account of their weakness.

As regards other texts of Cassian which would be helpful in discovering his view on the meaning of the prohibitions, it was possible to find only some texts where the word “*fornicatio*” is used. Among these texts, the one in *Coll* 20.11.1 seems relevant to our purposes. One could infer from this text that for Cassian the basic meaning of fornication was sexual relations between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.<sup>371</sup> Thus, due to a dearth of relevant data, we cannot say much about Cassian’s understanding of other prohibitions. We can only speculate that his understanding of the first prohibition from Acts 15:20.29 was possibly broader than just shunning the consumption of food offered to idols on the grounds of his use of the expression *idolorum cultus* denoting idolatry in general. As to Cassian’s understanding of abstaining from strangled animals and from blood, even less that this can be said. His knowledge of the Eastern version of Acts 15:20.29 may suggest that these prohibitions have a dietary sense in his view, but such conclusion is obviously far from certain.

#### Summary:

- A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29.
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 4.
- D) John Cassian’s understanding of the prohibitions:

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<sup>370</sup> Acts 15:29 is also indicated as a textual reference in all critical editions and translations of *Coll* 18.5.2 I have consulted: John Cassian, *Coll.* 18.5.2 (CSEL 13<sup>2</sup>,510); Id., *The Conferences* (transl. B. Ramsey) (ACW 57; New York, NY – Mahwah, NJ 1997) 655; Id., *Coll.* 18.5.2 (transl. C.S. Gibson) (NPNF 2-11,480).

<sup>371</sup> John Cassian, *Coll.* 20.11.1 (CSEL 13<sup>2</sup>,568). Translation: B. Ramsey, ACW 57,703.



a) *ab idolorum cultu...reuocati / ab inmolaticiis idolorum...temperarent*: Probably shunning all kinds of idolatry (together with eating food offered to animals).

b) *(ab) fornicatione...reuocati / temperarent*: Probably abstaining from sexual immorality between an unmarried man and an unmarried woman.

c) *(ab) suffocatis...reuocati / temperarent*: Lack of sufficient data. Possibly a dietary requirement (abstaining from eating strangled animals).

d) *(ab) sanguine... reuocati / temperarent*: Lack of sufficient data. Possibly a dietary requirement (abstaining from eating blood).

### 13. Hesychius of Jerusalem

Hesychius of Jerusalem, also called Hesychius the Presbyter (to avoid confusion with Hesychius, the Bishop of Jerusalem) lived and worked in 4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> century. Exact dates of his birth and death are unknown.<sup>372</sup> In his work entitled *In Leviticum Libri VII. Explanationum Allegoricarum sive Commentarius*, we find four references to Acts 15:29. This work, originally written in Greek, is extant only in its Latin translation. The discovery of a small Greek fragment of this work confirmed Hesychius' authorship of the commentary.<sup>373</sup> Still, this Greek fragment does not contain the passages important for our purposes, so we need to use the Latin translation. Unfortunately, no critical edition of the Latin text of *Commentarius in Leviticum* is available, and the text published in PG 93 is in a number of places difficult to understand,<sup>374</sup> thus raising question marks about the quality

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<sup>372</sup> M. Aubineau, SC 187,37-38.

<sup>373</sup> A. Wenger, "Hésychius de Jérusalem. Le fragment grec du commentaire 'In Leuiticum'", *Revue des études augustinienes* 2 (1956) 464-470.

<sup>374</sup> Cf. opinions of A. Wenger, "Hésychius de Jérusalem. Le fragment grec du commentaire 'In Leuiticum'", *Revue des études augustinienes*, 2 (1956) 466 and E. Zocca, "La lebbra e la sua purificazione nel Commentario al Levitico di Esichio: Un tentativo di confronto con la tradizione esegetica precedente e contemporanea" ASE 13/1 (1996) 179.

of the Latin translation and / or the history of the translation's textual transmission. Nevertheless, taking these limitations into account, we shall make an attempt at analysing the relevant passages to discover Hesychius' understanding of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions.

The first of the passages referring explicitly to the prohibitions in Acts 15 occurs in Book 1 of *Commentarius in Leviticum*. It reads as follows:

*Dicit enim peccata a quibus necesse sit, secundum quod ait Jacobus, etiam hos qui sunt ex gentibus abstinere, id est idolothytis, et suffocatis, et sanguine, et fornicatione.*<sup>375</sup>

It is not easy to establish whether Hesychius refers in this passage to Acts 15:20 or 15:29. Mentioning the speech of James would be an argument for the former, the use of the word *idolothytis*, however, would be in favour of the latter. The order of the prohibitions is different from those occurring in both verses in question so it cannot be interpreted as supporting either side.

The reference is followed by a commentary whose essential part for the purposes of this thesis is given below:

*Hic autem eum qui alienis peccatis communicavit demonstrat, hoc enim tactus immundi et morticini, et a bestiis capti innuit...*<sup>376</sup>

If, what is very probable, Hesychius identifies *suffocati* from Acts 15:20.29 with *morticinum et a bestiis captum* from the quotation above, then it means that he interprets abstaining from strangled animals in a metaphorical way, namely as abstaining from involvement in the sins committed by others. Such an interpretation would be in line with the

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<sup>375</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 1.5.1-13 (PG 93,832). Translation: "For he says that the sins from which it is necessary to abstain, and according to what James said, also Gentiles need to abstain from them, are as follows: food offered to idols, strangled animals, blood and unchastity" (translation mine).

<sup>376</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 1.5.1-13 (PG 93,832). Translation: "But here it denotes someone who partakes in other's sins and this is hinted by tasting unclean meats or flesh of animals which died of themselves and the ones caught by beasts" (translation mine).

Alexandrian school of exegesis which emphasized the spiritual meaning of the Scripture.

The next reference to the prohibitions occurs in Book 4, in the commentary on Lev 13:19. In this text, Hesychius ponders on the spiritual sense of a white and reddish swelling that may appear on the skin. Hesychius identifies white swellings as a metaphor of possible transgressions against the law and red swellings as a metaphor possible transgressions against the Gospel. Still, a question arises if some precepts of the law are still binding for Christians and if so, in what way they are binding.<sup>377</sup> At this point the passage which is relevant to our thesis appears:

*Ad ipsum pertinens utique Christum, ejusque mysterium, id est, idolothyti omnis sanguinis, et suffocati esus. Nam haec etsi legalia sunt praecepta, Ecclesiam tamen ea custodire apostoli praeceperunt, quod ostendit Jacobus dicens: Visum est sancto Spiritui, et nobis, nihil amplius superimponere vobis oneris, exceptis his, abstinere ab idolothytis, et sanguine, et suffocato, et fornicatione.*<sup>378</sup>

Thus, this passage clarifies what belongs to the law and still has to be kept by a Christian: abstaining from consumption of sacrificial food, of all blood and of strangled animals (*idolothyti omnis sanguinis, et suffocati esus*). Hesychius mentions that these dietary commandments point to Christ and Christ's mystery, nevertheless, he does not develop this theme any further. It is noteworthy that abstaining from fornication is not enumerated as a precept of the Mosaic Law although it subsequently appears in the quotation of Acts 15:29. It seems that Hesychius treated this prohibition like the one belonging more to the Gospel than to the Law. His mentioning of Matt 5:28 as an

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<sup>377</sup> Cf. Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4.13.18-23 (PG 93,940-941).

<sup>378</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4.13.18-23 (PG 93,941). Translation: "It is consumption of food offered to idols, all blood and strangled animals pointing undoubtedly to Christ himself and his mystery. For these precepts, although they come from the [Mosaic] Law, still the apostles commanded the Church to observe them which is shown by James who says: It is the Holy Spirit's and our decision to put on you no greater burden, except for abstaining from food offered to idols, from blood, from what was strangled and from fornication" (translation mine).

example of a commandment from the Gospel appears to confirm this statement.<sup>379</sup>

Finally, the third reference to the prohibitions from Acts 15 can be found in Book 5. In it, we read:

*Ergo oportet mandati hujus litteram custodire, et nullatenus comedere sanguinem. Hoc enim et apostolos invenies praecepisse, quando de quibusdam Judaicis observationibus contentione in Antiochensi Ecclesia facta, ad eos relata est quaestio, qui legem posuerunt, solventes quaestionem hanc, et definientes: "Visum est ergo Spiritui sancto et nobis nihil amplius imponere vobis oneris, quam ut abstineatis vos ab immolatis simulacrorum, et sanguine, et suffocato, et fornicatione."*<sup>380</sup>

This text which contains the Eastern-version quotation of Acts 15:29 is a part of a commentary to Lev 17:10-12. The passage from Lev contains the prohibition of blood consumption and also its explanation which is more extended than in other verses where this proscription occurs. Not only is it stated that the life of the body is in its blood, but also that the principle of restraining oneself from eating blood is connected with its special sacrificial status: it was, namely, given as a means to make an atonement for the lives of the members of God's people. As it can be seen already at the beginning of the above-quoted commentary, Hesychius seems to support the dietary sense of this prohibition and its literal observance. Nevertheless, the words which directly follow Hesychius' citation of Acts 15:29 appear to contradict this last observation. We read what follows:

*Propterea sanguinem quidem proprie homicidium, omnem autem sanguinem, omne fraternum odium intelligamus, quia "qui odit fratrem suum, homicida est", sicut Ioannes scripsit. Dicit ergo omnem sanguinem, injustitiam dolosorum. "Virum enim*

<sup>379</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 4.13.18-23 (PG 93,941).

<sup>380</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.17.10-12 (PG 93,1005). Translation: "Thus, it is necessary to observe the letter of this mandate and by no means eat blood. For this is what the apostles commanded, as you can find out. When a tension arose in the Church of Antioch because of some of the Jewish practices, a question was posed to the apostles who issued a law defining and solving the problem in the following way: 'Thus, the Holy Spirit and we have decided not to put on you a greater burden than that you abstain from what was sacrificed to idols, from blood, from what was strangled and from fornication'" (translation mine).

*sanguinum et dolosum abominabitur Dominus”: et quaecunque proximorum nocent vitae, per insidias quaslibet, ita ut homicidio sanguinis comparentur.*<sup>381</sup>

As we can see, Hesychius clearly expresses a view that shunning blood should be understood as shunning homicide. Moreover, he develops this thought further stating that abstaining from all blood would mean abstaining from all sorts of hatred and enmity towards others. The questions that inevitably arise here can be formulated in the following way: Can this latter comment be possibly reconciled with Hesychius' former statement that the ruling from Lev 17:10-12 should be observed and therefore blood should not be consumed? Is the Latin translation to blame for this apparent inconsistency? How does Hesychius ultimately perceive the meaning of abstaining from blood: as a dietary rule or as shunning murder?

The next words in the commentary appear to provide a solution of this dilemma:

*Et propterea ab omni sanguine abstineri oportet, scientes quia super animam quae talem sanguinem comedunt, de quibus dicebat David: “Qui devorant plebem meam sicut escam panis”, faciem suam obfirmat Deus, videlicet Christus.*<sup>382</sup>

This part of Hesychius' commentary seems to confirm his understanding of shunning blood as shunning murder. Not only the word “blood” is understood by him as a metonymy of homicide, but the whole expression “to eat blood” is in his use a metaphor of murder. Thus, it appears that even when Hesychius emphasizes literal observance of Lev 17:10-12, he, in fact, endorses abstaining from taking lives of others; in this case the formerly quoted expression *hujus mandati litteram custodire* would mean

<sup>381</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.17.10-12 (PG 93,1005). Translation: “Therefore, we, in fact, understand “blood” as a homicide, but all blood as all types of fraternal enmity because “he who hates his brother, is a murderer”, as John wrote. Thus he says, all blood, deceitful injustice. “For the Lord detests a sanguinary and deceitful man” and whoever does harm to a neighbour's life, by means of any type of snares, is compared to a sanguinary homicide” (translation mine).

<sup>382</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.17.10-12 (PG 93,1005). Translation: “And, therefore, it is necessary to abstain from all blood, knowing that God, Christ, is severe towards souls who eat the blood of such kind. About such souls, David said: ‘Who devour my people as if they were eating bread’” (translation mine).

observing not so much the literal meaning (as we understand it nowadays) of the commandment, but its real meaning and aim. Having said that, however, it is probable that Hesychius, while regarding shunning murder as essential meaning of abstaining from blood, supported also its keeping as a dietary rule as helpful to fulfil the goal of this precept.

It is also worth noting that the explanation from Lev 17:11 about blood given to Israelites for the purpose of atonement for their sins is regarded by Hesychius as signifying the blood of Christ poured out for the sins of humankind.<sup>383</sup> This statement appears to suggest that since the reality of Christ's atonement has already come true, its former symbol, blood of animal sacrifices, is not needed any more. In this way, abstaining from eating blood fulfilled its role and in principle does not have to be kept by a Christian. In such a context, it seems that the Apostolic Council's decision to proscribe blood consumption would only have a temporary normative value.

Taking into account all that has been said above about Hesychius' understanding of abstaining from blood, the last part of his commentary on Lev 17:10-12 is particularly worth quoting. It reads as follows:

*Quoniam autem dicit, 'Anima omnis carnis in sanguine ejus est', nullatenus substantiam animae sanguinem intelligamus, sed quia societatem cum carne per sanguinem habet, et quando hoc evacuatum fuerit, aut frigerit, tunc a carne dissolvitur sic Creatore naturam nostram disponente. Quia ergo Christus sanguinem suum ad expiationem animarum nostrarum dedit, ut ab omni nos homicidio omnique alia iniquitate, quae homicidio proxima est, abstinemus. Communis enim lex est, et contra omnes extenditur.*<sup>384</sup>

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<sup>383</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.17.10-12 (PG 93,1005).

<sup>384</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.17.10-12 (PG 93,1005-1006). Translation: "Still, since he says, 'The soul of all flesh is in its blood', we by no means understand blood as a substance of a soul, but that a soul has a connection with flesh through blood. And when blood would be removed or become cold, then it is separated from a flesh because our Creator arranged our nature in this way. Accordingly, Christ gave his blood as atonement for our souls, so that we may abstain from every homicide as well as every other iniquity which is close to homicide. Thus, this law is general and binding for all" (translation mine).

We can learn from this text that Hesychius did not interpret Lev 17:11 in such a way as if blood were a substance of a soul or of life. In his view, blood seems to be a bridge between a soul and a body, but its nature is different from a soul / from life. Nevertheless, the association of blood with life issues rather than with dietary matters appears to be dominant in Hesychius' perception of relevant biblical themes. He interprets blood in Lev as a synonym of life,<sup>385</sup> therefore, abstaining from blood seems to be for him an equivalent of abstaining from (taking someone's) life. Shunning homicide and everything connected with it is a necessary requirement for all the followers of Christ who teaches them and empowers them to do it by sacrificing his own blood. Hesychius emphasizes the relevance and binding character of this commandment for all.

As to the prohibition of eating strangled animals, Hesychius does not explicitly reveal his interpretation of it. He explains, however, an allegorical meaning of *morticina* and *a bestiis capta*. Since, as we will see, Jerome identified them with the term *suffocata*, it is at least possible that Hesychius who like Jerome lived at worked in Palestine not only knew but also accepted this identification. In any event, Hesychius interpreted *morticina* and *a bestiis capta* in general as *desire of sinners (peccatorum desiderium)*. Continuing, he explained in more detail that the term *morticina* means the ones who choose death by committing unchastity or by being proud of sin, and *a bestiis capta* denotes these persons who neglecting to be cautious became seized by intelligent beasts, i.e. evil spirits.<sup>386</sup>

Finally, as regards the prohibition of fornication, it seems that Hesychius by quoting Hos 4:14 in which the meaning of fornication is clearly distinguished from the meaning of adultery and commenting on Lev 18:6-17, he appears to understand fornication as any sexual relations outside

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<sup>385</sup> Cf. Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 2.7. 26-27 (PG 93,867).

<sup>386</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 2.7.23-25 (PG 93,866-867).

marriage between non-married people, in contrast to adultery which denotes illicit sexual relations where at least one party is married.<sup>387</sup>

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:20, Acts 15:29.

B) Textual version: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4.

D) Hesychius' understanding of the prohibitions:

a) *Abstinere ab immolatis simulacrorum*: Abstaining from food offered to idols. Hesychius was probably in favour of keeping this commandment literally although he seems to have understood it also metaphorically.

b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Shunning homicide. Still, it is probable that Hesychius still condoned observance of this prohibition as a dietary law as a means to teach respect for life.

c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Probably abstaining from sexual relations between a man and a woman who are both single.

d) *Abstinere a suffocato*: At least possibly Hesychius understood it metaphorically as shunning acts of unchastity, acts of pride or being in the power of evil spirits.

#### 14. Cyril of Alexandria

The second Cyril from the early Christianity who quoted and commented on Acts 15:29 in his works, presented very original views with regard to the normativity of the prohibitions; therefore, the analysis of his works is particularly important. Cyril (ca. 380-444), archbishop of Alexandria and a fervent polemist, was, after Clement and Origen, another influential and prolific writer from this great intellectual centre in antiquity. Among his most important writings, we find a monumental apologetic work *Contra*

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<sup>387</sup> Hesychius of Jerusalem, *Commentarius in Leviticum* 5.18.6-17 (PG 93,1010-1011).



*Iulianum*. This work, consisting of twenty books (only half of them are extant),<sup>388</sup> was composed as a polemic against the book *Against the Galileans* written by emperor Julian the Apostate who, having been raised a Christian, renounced his faith when in power and started to oppose it actively.

It is near the end of the book 10 of *Contra Iulianum* where we find a quotation from Acts 15:29 accompanied by Cyril's explanations. The quotation, together with an introductory sentence, reads as follows:

Διαμέμνηται δὲ καὶ τῆς τῶν ἁγίων ἀποστόλων ἐπιστολῆς, ἣν γεγράφασιν οἰκονομικῶς<sup>389</sup> μονονουχὶ καὶ ἀρτιθαλῇ τὴν διάνοιαν ἔχουσι τοῖς ἐξ ἐθνῶν κεκλημένοις. «Ἐδοξε γὰρ», ἔφασκον, «τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες, ἀποσχέσθαι ὑμᾶς εἰδωλοθύτου καὶ πορνείας καὶ πνικτοῦ καὶ αἵματος.»<sup>390</sup>

The quoted text of Acts is close to the Alexandrian text type, represented by *Codex Vaticanus* (B); the main difference lies in the sequence of the prohibitions which are mentioned in *Contra Iulianum* according to the order found in Acts 15:20.<sup>391</sup> The citation is introduced in connection with the Cyril's presentation of Julian's peculiar view about the Apostolic Council. Julian claims, namely, that according to the letter written by the apostles during the Apostolic Council, the Holy Spirit was not in favour

<sup>388</sup> J. Chapman, "St. Cyril of Alexandria", *The Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York 1908), <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/04592b.htm> (accessed on 3.08.2015).

<sup>389</sup> Böckenhoff provides an interesting explanation of the word οἰκονομικῶς: "Auf menschliche Handlungen Übertragen, bedeutet es unter anderem, aus erziehlichen Gründen trotz der eigenen höheren Einsicht sich im Handeln den beschränkten Begriffen den anderen anpassen, um ihn nähmlich dadurch zu gewinnen": Böckenhoff, *Das apostolische Speisegesetz*, 105.

<sup>390</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 9.47 (GCS.NF 21,672-673). Translation: "So he mentioned the epistle of the holy apostles which they wrote as almost a concession to those who were not yet mature in their thinking and who were called from the Gentiles. 'For it was good', they affirmed, 'in the eyes of the Holy Spirit and ours, to lay on you no greater burden than these necessary things: That you may abstain from food offered to idols, from unchastity, from what was strangled and from blood'" (translation mine).

<sup>391</sup> Other differences: ἀποσχέσθαι *Contra Iulianum* : ἀπέχεσθαι Acts (*Codex Vaticanus*); εἰδωλοθύτου *Contra Iulianum* : εἰδωλοθύτων Acts (*Codex Vaticanus*); πνικτοῦ *Contra Iulianum* : πνικτῶν Acts (*Codex Vaticanus*).

of abrogating the Mosaic Law for Christians. Cyril manifests his disagreement with this view in two rhetorical questions:

Ἦδοξε γάρ, εἰπέ μοι, τὸ χρῆναι τηρεῖν καὶ τοῦτο προστέταχεν; Καίτοι πῶς οὐκ ἀληθὲς εἰπεῖν, ὅτι τὸ χρῆναι λοιπὸν τῆς τοῦ νόμου σκιᾶς ὀλιγωρεῖν ἐκέλευσε τοῖς διὰ τῆς πίστεως κεκλημένοις εἰς ἀλήθειαν;<sup>392</sup>

Having rebutted Julian's opinion, Cyril presents his own understanding of the purpose of the Apostolic Council. He writes:

Ἄ γὰρ ἦν εἰκὸς ἀποπεραίνειν δύνασθαι τοὺς ἔτι νηπίους, διὰ τῆς τῶν ἀγίων ἀποστόλων ἐθεσμοθέτει φωνῆς. Φάσκοντες δὲ τὸ, «Μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος» ἐδίδασκον ἐν αὐτῷ διαβριθῆ τὸν νόμον καὶ δυσδιακόμιστον παντελῶς καὶ αὐτοῖς τοῖς ἐξ Ἰσραὴλ, ὃν οὐκ ἂν ἐπιθεῖεν αὐτοῖς. Ἐδόκει δὲ οὖν τῷ πνεύματι φυλάττεσθαι παρ' αὐτῶν ἡκιστα μὲν τὸν νόμον, τὰ δὲ οἰοτὰ καὶ εὐδιακόμιστα πειρᾶσθαι πληροῦν τοὺς ὑπὲρ τῶν ἔτι μειζόνων ἰδρωτάς οὕτω διενεγκεῖν ἰσχύοντας ὀκλάζοντι νῶ ἄρτι τε καὶ μόλις ἄδρυνομένῳ πρὸς τὴν ἐν Χριστῷ πολιτείαν καὶ ζωήν.<sup>393</sup>

In this passage, Cyril quotes once again the words taken from Acts 15:28 (Μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος) and interprets them as a hint to understand the apostles' position on the question of the observance of the Jewish law. The implication of these words is, according to him, entirely contrary to Julian's opinion. Non-imposing any greater burden than what is necessary means that Christians of Gentile origin are released from the observance of the Mosaic Law whose prescriptions were difficult to keep even for Israelites. Nevertheless, these Christians were told to try to observe

<sup>392</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 9.47 (GCS.NF 21,673). Translation: "So tell me, did [the Holy Spirit] think that it was necessary to observe [these things] and [therefore] he prescribed them? And further, cannot one truly say that [the Holy Spirit] commanded those who through faith were called to the truth the necessity to esteem lightly the shadow of the law?" Cf. German translation in: Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 104.

<sup>393</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 9.47 (GCS.NF 21,673). Translation: "For the things they, when being still neofits, could reasonably accomplish, were ordered by the voice of the holy apostles. With the words: "to lay on you no greater burden" they taught them that the Law was hard and difficult to fulfil in its entirety even for those from Israel; they themselves did not keep the Law. So it was good in the eyes of the Spirit that the Law would not be kept at all [by the converts], but they should try to fulfil what was bearable and easy to practice, they who were not yet strong enough to cope with greater matters because their resolve was weak and only a little ready for the kingdom and life in Christ." Cf. German translation in: Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 104.

(πειράσθαι πληροῦν) these parts of the Mosaic Law which are enduring and easy to keep (τὰ [...] οἷστὰ καὶ εὐδιακόμιστα). This exception was introduced for an educational purpose: Newly converted Christians of Gentile origin, not being yet able to grasp the depth of a Christian way of life, were told to observe a small number of less demanding precepts from the Jewish law, probably to learn the discipline necessary to make progress in being a better Christian. Böckenhoff, interpreting this part of Cyril's exposition, puts it as follows:

Die Apostel konnten von den Neulingen aus dem Heidentume (...) nicht gleich die volle Verwirklichung des christlichen Ideals in deren Lebensführung, die volle "Reife für Christi Reich und Leben" erwarten. Darum begnügten sie sich in weiser Mäßigung, ihnen vorläufig einige äußerliche Beobachtungen aufzulegen, um sie allmählich auf dem Wege der Selbstverleugnung tiefer in den Geist des christlichen Gesetzes einzuführen. Diese Beobachtungen hatten sie dem alten Gesetze entnommen, welches ja in all seinen Vorschriften ein Führer zu Christus hin sein sollte. Das hohe Ziel, das die Apostel anstrebten, rechtfertigte die ausnahmsweise, ökonomische Anwendung von Legalien, zumal sie den Heidenchristen gegenüber betonten, daß sie um das mosaische Gesetz als solches sich gar nicht zu kümmern brauchten.<sup>394</sup>

From the quotations and analyses given above, it can be deduced that Cyril understood the Apostolic Council's prohibitions as dietary regulations (of course except πορνεία to the meaning of which we shall return later). Let us now analyse another crucial passage from *Contra Iulianum* to get more insight into Cyril's opinion in this matter. In Book 7 of this apologetic work, he admits that there is a custom among Christians to shun food offered to idols, but it does not mean that Christians are afraid to eat such food or that they hold this food as unclean. He writes:

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<sup>394</sup> Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 105. Translation: "The apostles could not have expected from the newcomers from paganism full realization of Christian ideals in their lives, full 'maturity for Christ's kingdom and life'. Therefore, they contented themselves with a wise decision to impose on them some superficial rulings in order to introduce them gradually and more deeply into the spirit of the Christian law by means of a way of self-denial. They took these rulings from the old law which with all its provisions was supposed to be leading to Christ. The high end the apostles aimed at justified the exceptional use of old legal regulations, particularly since the apostles clarified to the Christians of Gentile origin that these Christians do not need to worry about the Mosaic Law as such" (translation mine).

Ἀναιροῦντες τοίνυν, καὶ τοῦτο εἰσάπαν, τὴν εἰδώλων ὑπαρξιν οὐδὲ ἱερόθυτον εἶναι τί φαμεν· ἐσθίομεν δὲ συνειδότι καθαρῷ θεῷ τὴν δόξαν ἀνάπτοντες ὡς ἀπάντων ἡμῖν τῶν ἐδωδίων ἐλευθέραν τε καὶ ἀζέμιον χαρισαμένῳ τὴν χρῆσιν. Εἰ δὲ ἀσθενεῖ τις ἐν τούτοις, ὑγιαῖν τε οὐπω καὶ εὐρωστον ἔχει τὸν νοῦν, οἴεται δὲ εἶναι τι καὶ ἱερόθυτον ἀληθῶς, οὐπω βεβηκότι περὶ τὸ γνήσιον εἰς πίστιν συγκαθιστάμεθα ὥσπερ τινὲς παιδοτρίβαι διαγυμνάζοντες τὰ μεράκια, ἀναβιβάζοντές τε κατὰ βραχὺ πρὸς τελεωτάτην τοῦ πράγματος ἐμπειρίαν. Οἰκονομικώτατα γοῦν ὁ Παῦλος φησιν· «Εἰ ἐγὼ χάριτι μετέχω, τί βλασφημοῦμαι ὑπὲρ οὗ ἐγὼ εὐχαριστῶ;» Οὐκοῦν ἀδικήσει μὲν παντελῶς οὐδὲν τοὺς ἰδρυμένους ἐν πίστει τὸ καὶ αὐτῶν ἄπτεσθαι τῶν ἱεροθύτων, εἰ τύχη. Εἰδώλου γὰρ ὅλως οὐκ ὄντος οὐδὲ ἱερόθυτον ἔσται τι.<sup>395</sup>

Cyril clearly affirms that pagan gods do not exist and, consequently, the food offered to them (ἱερόθυτον) contains no evil power in itself. Accordingly, Christians may eat such food with a clean conscience (συνειδότι καθαρῷ). If there is anyone among Christians who still has scruples in this matter, other Christians need to help him by giving him proper instruction. We see that Cyril treats the ruling to abstain from the consumption of food sacrificed to idols (and most probably other dietary prohibitions of the Apostolic Council) as a temporary legal requirement that in his times was not binding to Christians any more.<sup>396</sup>

As far as the meaning of πορνεία is concerned, neither the former quotations nor the latter one provide any explanations. It seems unquestionable that Cyril understands πορνεία as sexual immorality, but it is hard to state anything more in greater detail.

<sup>395</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Contra Iulianum* 7.21 (GCS.NF 21,499-500). Translation: "Denying, therefore, once and for all the existence of idols, we declare that neither sacrifices offered to idols are anything: We eat [them] with a clean conscience, offering up glory to God who gave us grace to make use of food freely and without harm. Still, if anyone is weak with regard to this matter and does have a sound and firm conviction, but thinks that sacrifices to idols are really something [harmful] and has not yet really come to faith, we help such a person acting like some gymnastic trainers who train boys making them get within short time the finest progress in the matter. At any rate, Paul very aptly said: "When I eat with gratitude, why should I be blamed [for food] I give thanks for?" Therefore, no one will be harmed who feasted in faith, even if someone partakes of some food offered to idols. For as idols do not exist at all, neither food offered to them is anything" (translation mine).

<sup>396</sup> Cf. Böckenhoff, *Speisegesetz*, 105-106. K. Six, however, expresses uncertainty whether Cyril really understood the dietary prohibitions from the Apostolic Decree as temporary binding: Six, *Aposteldekret*, XIV.

### Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29.

B) Textual version: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4.

D) Cyril's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀποσχέσθαι ὑμᾶς εἰδωλοθύτου: Shunning food offered to idols.

According to Cyril, this prohibition was introduced by the Apostles to teach Christians of Gentile origin the value of discipline in a Christian way of life. Accordingly, this prohibition had only a temporarily binding character. Mature Christians in times of Cyril did not have to observe this ruling any more.

b) [ἀποσχέσθαι ὑμᾶς] πορνείας: Shunning sexual immorality.

c) [ἀποσχέσθαι ὑμᾶς] πνικτοῦ: Shunning strangled animals.

According to Cyril, this prohibition was introduced by the Apostles to teach Christians of Gentile origin the value of discipline in a Christian way of life. Accordingly, this prohibition had only a temporarily binding character. Mature Christians in times of Cyril did not have to observe this ruling any more.

d) [ἀποσχέσθαι ὑμᾶς] αἵματος: Shunning blood consumption.

According to Cyril, this prohibition was introduced by the Apostles to teach Christians of Gentile origin the value of discipline in a Christian way of life. Accordingly, this prohibition had only a temporarily binding character. Mature Christians in times of Cyril did not have to observe this ruling any more.

## 15. Theodoret of Cyrus

Theodoret (c. 393 – c. 458), bishop of Cyrus, is another early Christian writer whose references and comments need to be analysed in this chapter. He was a prominent representative of the Antiochene school of exegesis and a very prolific author who apart from works dealing with history and dogmatic theology, wrote also a great deal of biblical commentaries. It is in one of these commentaries, namely in the *Interpretation of the Epistle to*

*Galatians*<sup>397</sup> that we find a reference to Acts 15.<sup>398</sup> The text with this reference reads as follows:

Βαρνάβας καὶ Παῦλος (...) [π]εῖσαι δὲ τὸν σύλλογον τῶν πιστῶν ἐθελήσαντες, ὅτι καὶ τοῖς μεγάλοις ἀποστόλοις τοῦτο δοκεῖ, ἔδραμον μὲν εἰς τὴν Ἰουδαίαν, ἐδίδαξαν δὲ τοὺς ἀποστόλους τὰ παρ' ἐκείνων γεγενημένα, καὶ ἐκόμισαν γράμματα διαρρήδην παρεγγυῶντα, μὴ ἐπιθεῖναι τοῖς ἔθνεσι τὸν τοῦ νόμου ζυγόν, ἀλλ' ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτου, καὶ πορνείας, καὶ πνικτοῦ, καὶ αἵματος.<sup>399</sup>

The information that Paul and Barnabas received a letter from the apostles is a clear indication that the author refers to Acts 15:29. In spite of this fact, he enumerates the prohibitions in an order found in Acts 15:20 what can probably be attributed to inaccuracy which is typical for a person quoting from memory. In the text cited above as well as in its nearest context, there are no explicit statements of Theodoret which would provide information about his understanding of the meaning of the prohibitions. Nevertheless, in the same chapter, there is an interesting comment which can be helpful in answering this question. In it, Theodoret makes a distinction between two different types of precepts of the Mosaic Law:

<sup>397</sup> An informative discussion of the problems related to the dates of composition of Theodoret's commentaries can be found in: J.-N. Guinot, *L'exégèse de Théodoret de Cyr* (TH 100; Paris 1995) 48-63.

<sup>398</sup> Apart from this passage, there is another one in *Int. Eph., Argumentum*, which in theory could count as a reference to Acts 15:29. Nevertheless, the information it contains has a too generic character for the purposes of thesis and, therefore, there is no need to analyse it. Its text reads as follows: "Ἐν Ἀντιοχείᾳ γὰρ, τῆς περὶ τοῦ νόμου ζητήσεως γενομένης, ἀπεστάλησαν πρὸς τοὺς ἁγίους ἀποστόλους οἱ θεϊότατοι Βαρνάβας καὶ Παῦλος, καὶ τῆς ἀμφισβητήσεως τὴν λύσιν δεξάμενοι, καὶ τὰ περὶ ταύτης κομισάμενοι γράμματα, κατέλαβον πάλιν τὴν Ἀντιόχειαν": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Eph., Argumentum* (PG 82,505). Translation: "When questions were raised about the Law at Antioch, remember, the most divine Barnabas and Paul were sent to the holy apostles, and once they received the solution to the uncertainty, armed with letters on the subject they went back again to Antioch": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 31.

<sup>399</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Gal. 2.1-2* (PG 82,469). Translation: "Barnabas and Paul (...) intent on convincing the gathering of the faithful that this was also the view of the mighty apostles, they made for Judea and put the apostles in the picture, and they got hold of letters giving a clear recommendation not to impose the yoke of the Law on the Gentiles – only to abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from fornication, from what has been strangled and from blood": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 6.

Τὰ ἀναγκαῖα τοῦ νόμου καὶ ἡ φύσις ἐδίδασκε τουτέστι τό· Οὐ μοιχεύσεις, οὐ φονεύσεις, οὐ κλέψεις, οὐ ψευδομαρτυρήσεις κατὰ τοῦ πλησίον σου μαρτυρίαν ψευδῆ, τίμα τὸν πατέρα σου καὶ τὴν μητέρα σου, καὶ ὅσα τοιαῦτα. Τὰ δὲ γε περὶ Σαββάτου, καὶ περιτομῆς, καὶ λεπροῦ, καὶ γονορροῦς, καὶ θυσιῶν, καὶ περιρραντηρίων, ἴδια ἦν τοῦ νόμου· οὐδὲν γὰρ περὶ τούτων ἡ φύσις ἐπαίδευσε. (...) Τούτων δὲ ἡ μὲν παράβασις ἁμαρτία, ἡ δὲ φυλακὴ οὐ δικαιοσύνης τελείας κατόρθωσις. Ταῦτα γὰρ ἐτέρων αἰνίγματα· Ἰουδαίοις δὲ ὅμως κατ' ἐκεῖνον ἤρμοπτε τὸν καιρόν. Περὶ τούτων εἶπεν ὁ θεῖος Ἀπόστολος, "Διότι οὐ δικαιωθήσεται ἐξ ἔργων νόμου πᾶσα σὰρξ." <sup>400</sup>

We see that for Theodoret it is nature which constitutes a principal criterion according to which the precepts of the Mosaic Law are divided. Accordingly, there are precepts taught by nature (basic moral principles) and precepts not taught by nature (all other commandments of the Law). In Theodoret's view, the above-quoted words of Paul from Gal 2:16b refer to the latter category of the precepts. This fact, as well as Theodoret's words about the appropriateness of these rulings "at that time" (i.e., at the time of the Old Covenant) and their prefigurative character in reality, indicate that he likely held the commandments of the Law which were not taught by nature as temporarily binding.<sup>401</sup> In the light of the above-quoted examples of precepts belonging to one of the already mentioned categories, it seems that in Theodoret's view all the apostolic prohibitions except fornication belong to the group of commandments not taught by nature. One more aspect of Theodoret's opinion about the old legal regulations from the initial books of the Old Testament needs to be mentioned here. This view is succinctly formulated in Q.1 on Lev. from his opus *Qaestiones in Octateuchum*:

<sup>400</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Gal.* 2.15-16 (PG 82,473). Translation: "Even nature taught the basic precepts of the Law: You shall not commit adultery, you shall not kill, you shall not steal, you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor, honor your father and your mother, and suchlike. The precepts about the Sabbath, on the contrary, about circumcision, leprosy, menstruation, sacrifices, and aspersions are peculiar to the Law: nature taught nothing about them (...) But while transgression of these was a sin, observance did not constitute achievement of perfect righteousness. In fact, they prefigured other things, but at that time they were appropriate for Jews. It was of them the divine apostle said, *For that reason all flesh will not be justified from works of the Law*": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 8.

<sup>401</sup> Cf. Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. Tit.* 1.15-16 (PG 82,861-864); in English translation: Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 254-255.

οὐκοῦν τοῦ νόμου τὸ μὲν αἰσθητὸν καὶ ἐπιπόλαιον, ἰουδαίοις κατάλληλον, τὸ δὲ πνευματικὸν τοῖς τὴν εὐαγγελικὴν πολιτείαν ἀσπαζομένοις.<sup>402</sup>

We see that Theodoret emphasizes the spiritual meaning of the Law for Christians. By putting this meaning in contrast with superficial and material features of the Law, he seems to express a view that all these non-spiritual aspects of the Old Covenant do not belong to the list of Christian duties.

Having said that, let us analyse other texts of Theodoret thematically connected with the prohibitions mentioned in Acts 15:29 to find out more precise information about this writer's understanding of the rulings from the Apostolic Decree. We begin with his *Interpretation of 1 Cor* where, quoting 1 Cor 8:7, he comments:

Οὐχ ἡ βρώσις μολύνει, ἀλλὰ ἡ συνείδησις μολύνεται, τὴν τελείαν οὐ δεξαμένη γινώσκιν, ἔτι δὲ τῇ πλάνῃ τῶν εἰδώλων κατεχομένη.<sup>403</sup>

Theodoret believes that food is good in its nature and the fact that it was sacrificed to idols does not change this reality. Nevertheless, if someone does not know or does not accept this truth and associates eating food sacrificed to idols with an act of idolatry, such a person's conscience becomes defiled, should he / she perform this type of an act. Commenting on the verses that follow, Theodoret points out that eating sacrifices offered to

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<sup>402</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. Oct. Q.1 in Lev, Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum. Editio Critica* (eds. N. Fernandez Marcos – A. Saenz-Badillos) (TECC 17; Madrid 1979) 156. The critical assessment of this edition can be found in: Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch 1* (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 1; Washington, DC 2007) LXVI-LXXIII. Translation: "The materialistic and superficial in the Law is relevant to the Jews, the spiritual to those who have embraced the evangelical way of life": Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 2; Washington, DC 2007) 9.

<sup>403</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. 1 Cor. 8.7* (PG 82,292). Translation: "It is not food that defiles it: the conscience is defiled through not receiving mature knowledge and being still in the grip of the idols' deception": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 193.



idols would be a bad example to individuals still weak in faith. Moreover, he notes that such a consumption may also be a form of gluttony.<sup>404</sup>

With regard to Theodoret's understanding of abstaining from blood and from strangled animals, it is helpful to take into account his already mentioned work *Quaestiones in Octateuchum* written in a style of questions and answers where he expresses his opinion about blood consumption prohibitions in the Old Testament.

The first reference to blood consumption is found in Q.54 in Gen (Gen 9:3) where the question being answered is why God forbade eating blood. In his reply, Theodoret states that blood of an animal can be compared to life / soul (ψυχή) of a human being. When someone eats meat without blood, he / she eats it as a lifeless (ἄψυχον) vegetable. By doing this, such a person shows his / her respect for life in general (such a conclusion, although not explicitly formulated, can, nevertheless, be inferred from Theodoret's comment).<sup>405</sup>

The next thematically connected text occurs in Q.23 in Lev. In it, Theodoret answers the question arising from Lev 17:3 why God forbade to kill cattle, lambs and goats away from the Tent of Meeting. He writes:

ἦδει τὴν ἐνίων ἀσέβειαν, καὶ ὅτι τοῖς δαίμοσι θυσίας προσοίσουσιν. προσέταξε τοίνυν πάντα θῦσαι βουλόμενον ἢ μόσχον, ἢ πρόβατον, ἢ αἶγα, παρὰ τὴν θύραν τῆς σκηνῆς ἀγαγεῖν, καὶ τὸ αἷμα ἐκχέαι, καὶ μεταλαβεῖν οἴκαδε τῶν κρεῶν. τὸν δὲ τοῦτο μὴ δρῶντα, ὡς φόνου ἔνοχον κατηγορεῖσθαι ἐκέλευσεν.<sup>406</sup>

<sup>404</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. 1 Cor.* 8.8-13 (PG 82,292). English translation in: Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 193-194.

<sup>405</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. Oct. Q.54 in Gen, Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum. Editio Critica* (eds. N. Fernandez Marcos – A. Saenz-Badillos) (TECC 17; Madrid 1979) 52-53; Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch 1* (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 1; Washington, DC 2007) 114-115.

<sup>406</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. Oct. Q.23 in Lev, Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum. Editio Critica* (eds. N. Fernandez Marcos – A. Saenz-Badillos) (TECC 17; Madrid 1979) 177. Translation: "He was aware that some people were idolaters and knew

Directly after this comment, he quotes Lev 17:4. Here it is specified that a person not complying with the ruling mentioned above will be guilty of bloodshed. Theodoret understood this commandment also as a remedy against idolatry: Bringing an animal to the Tent of Meeting and pouring its blood was a guarantee that no idolatrous sacrifice will be performed because there will be no blood necessary for such a rite. Thus, we see here another reason for a prohibition to consume blood: a prevention from pagan worship practices.

This point is further developed by Theodoret when he introduces the quotation of Lev 17:11-12, containing *expressis verbis* blood consumption prohibition because of a cultic reason (blood of animals needs to be used as an atonement for human lives). He comments on this quotation in the following way:

Ἀπηγόρευσε δὲ καὶ τὸ ἐσθίειν αἷμα, καὶ τὴν αἰτίαν ἐδίδαξεν· ὥσπερ, φησί, σὺν ὀψυχὴν ἀθάνατον ἔχεις, οὕτω τὸ ἄλογον ζῷον ἀντὶ ψυχῆς ἔχει τὸ αἷμα. οὐ δὲ χάριν κελεύει τὴν τοῦ ἀλόγου ψυχὴν, τουτέστι τὸ αἷμα, ἀντὶ τῆς σῆς προσενεχθῆναι ψυχῆς, τῆς ἀθανάτου καὶ λογικῆς. ἐὰν δὲ τοῦτο φάγῃς, ψυχὴν ἐσθίεις· λογικῆς γὰρ ψυχῆς τοῦτο τάξιν πληροῖ· διὸ καὶ φόνον τὴν βρώσιν ὠνόμασε. τούτου ἕνεκα καὶ τὰ τεθνηκότα τῶν ζώων ἐσθίειν ἀπαγορεύει, ὥς τοῦ αἵματος μὴ χωρισθέντος τοῦ σώματος.<sup>407</sup>

Theodoret reiterates here his already formulated thought: Blood of animals is necessary for making an atonement for human life. The reasoning of the Bishop of Cyrus is a bit perplexing, but if I understand it correctly, he

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they would offer sacrifices to demons. So he ordered anyone who wished to slay a calf, sheep, or goat to bring it to the door of the tabernacle, pour out the blood, and consume the meat at home. Whoever did not do this was to be regarded as guilty of murder": Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch* 2 (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 2; Washington, DC 2007) 59.

<sup>407</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. Oct. Q.23 in Lev, Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum. Editio Critica* (eds. N. Fernandez Marcos – A. Saenz-Badillos) (TECC 17; Madrid 1979) 178. Translation: "In other words, 'as you have an immortal soul, so the brute beast has blood for a soul; thus, he commands that the brute beast's soul – that is, its blood – be offered for your immortal and rational soul. If you eat the blood, you eat its soul, since the blood takes the place of a rational soul.' Thus, he went so far as to call its consumption 'murder'. Therefore, he also forbade the eating of animals that had died a natural death, since the blood had not been drained from the body": Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch* 2 (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 2; Washington, DC 2007) 59.61.

seems to emphasize the necessity of not wasting blood because otherwise atonement would not be able to be offered and it would be like a “murder” of a human being manifested in preventing him / her from getting cleansed from sins.

Finally, in Q.11 in Deut, Theodoret tackles the dilemma once again writing:

Τί δήποτε συνεχῶς ἀπαγορεύει τὴν τοῦ αἵματος βρῶσιν;

Ἐφη μὲν καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ νομοθέτης, ὅτι τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ψυχὴ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶ. πλὴν οἶμαι τὸν νόμον καὶ ἕτερον πραγματεύεσθαι. τὴν μαιφόνον γὰρ αὐτῶν ἰατρεύει γνώμην, εἰ γὰρ τὸ τῶν ἀλόγων αἷμα γαγεῖν, ψυχὴν ἐστὶ φαγεῖν, πολλῷ μᾶλλον ἀνόσιον τὸ τὴν λογικὴν ψυχὴν χωρίσαι τοῦ σώματος.<sup>408</sup>

In this passage, Theodoret reiterates his thought about the connection of blood consumption prohibition with shunning murder. It seems that in his opinion the observance of not-eating animals' blood (identified with soul / life) was an act of respect towards the Creator of all life to whom all life belongs. A person who had this kind of respect, would be highly unlikely to commit any other more disrespectful act against life. Thus, blood consumption prohibition was meant to be “a safety fence” discouraging human beings from entering the territory of much more heinous violation of God's law, namely homicide.

To sum up, in Theodoret's opinion the prohibition of consumption of blood and strangled animals was introduced in the Old Testament in order to teach human beings to shun idolatry and murder. Consequently, we are entitled to assume that these prohibitions in the Apostolic Decree served, in Theodoret's view, the same purpose.

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<sup>408</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Quaest. Oct. Q.11 in Deut, Theodoretī Cyrensis Quaestiones in Octateuchum. Editio Critica* (eds. N. Fernandez Marcos – A. Saenz-Badillos) (TECC 17; Madrid 1979) 240. Translation: “Why did he repeat so often the prohibition against the consumption of blood? Admittedly, it was the Lawgiver himself who declared that the beast's blood is its soul. My view, however, is that this law had also a secondary purpose: to cure their readiness to homicide. For if to consume the blood of brute beasts is to consume their soul, it must be much more wicked to sever the rational soul from its body”: Theodoret of Cyrus, *The Questions on the Octateuch 2* (transl. R.C. Hill) (LEC 2; Washington, DC 2007) 199.

As far as Theodoret's understanding of abstaining from πορνεία is concerned, we find an interesting statement of his in the *Commentary on 1 Cor* (6:16-17). He writes:

Οὐκ ἀπεικότως τὸ περὶ τῆς γαμικῆς συναφείας εἰρημένον τέθεικεν ἐπὶ τῆς πορνείας, ἔν γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο κάκεῖνο τῇ φύσει τοῦ πράγματος· τὸ δὲ ἔννομον καὶ παράνομον δείκνυσι τὴν διαφοράν.<sup>409</sup>

In these words, Theodoret reveals to us how he understands the use of the word πορνεία in the particular verse he comments on: It denotes sexual relations other than the ones in the bond of marriage. Naturally, we do not have an absolute guarantee that the broad meaning of this term applies, according to Theodoret, also to the meaning of πορνεία in Acts 15, but it is certainly at least possible.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29.

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4.

D) Theodoret's understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτου: Eating food offered to idols is clearly unacceptable for someone who associates it with an act of idolatry. It is also wrong when it leads others into sin or is a form of gluttony. Theodoret does not clearly state if the consumption of sacrifices would be admissible if it was not done in any of these circumstances. In any event, he seems to be rather in favour of the opinion that this prohibition is binding for Christians only in limited number of situations and for limited time.

b) ἀπέχεσθαι πορνείας: Possibly, this apostolic prohibition denotes all non-marital sexual relations.

<sup>409</sup> Theodoret of Cyrus, *Int. 1 Cor.* 6:16-17 (PG 82,269). Translation: "It was not inappropriate for him to apply what is said of the marriage union to fornication, both former and latter being the same in the kind of action involved; but he brings out the difference between the licit and the illicit": Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul 1* (transl. R.C. Hill) (Brookline, MA 2001) 180.

c) ἀπέχεσθαι πνικτοῦ: The explanation given below in the sub-point “d” applies also to this prohibition against eating strangled animals.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: Taking into account Theodoret’s hermeneutical principle already mentioned above, it appears that the most important goal of this prohibition was to teach people to shun murder and idolatry. All the other reasons mentioned by Theodoret in his *Questions on Octateuch*, seem to be, to use his own expression, “material” ones, given to Jewish people of the Old Dispensation. It is not clear, however, if Theodoret held the literal observance of this prohibition as still binding for Christians. Possibly not, but even if he did, he probably treated it as an exception and a ruling of temporary validity.

## 16. Socrates Scholasticus of Constantinople

Socrates (c. 380 – after 439), the last author analysed in this chapter, is known for his *Ecclesiastical History* (Ἐκκλησιαστική Ἱστορία) which covers the period between the years 305 and 439. Even though the author did not include a description of the first three centuries of Christianity in his work, we find in volume 5 of his history a full quotation of the Jerusalem Decree taken from Acts 15. This citation occurs in chapter 22 where differences between local traditions with regard to the celebration of Easter, fasting and other issues are presented. Socrates, wishing to show that different opinions on a number of matters in Christianity existed already in apostolic times as well as wishing to demonstrate how such dilemmas were resolved, presents for this purpose the Apostolic Decree. First, he begins with a few words of explanation, writing:

ἐπεὶ γὰρ ἔγνωσαν οἱ ἀπόστολοι ταραχὴν ἐκ τῆς διαφωνίας τῶν ἔθνων κινουμένην τοῖς πιστεύουσιν, πάντες ἅμα γενομένοι θεῖον νόμον ἐθέσπισαν, ἐν τύπῳ ἐπιστολῆς καταγράψαντες, δι’ οὗ τῆς βαρυτάτης μὲν περὶ τῶν τοιούτων δουλείας τε καὶ ἐρεσχελίας τοὺς πιστεύοντας ἠλευθέρωσαν, ὑποτύπωσιν δὲ ἀσφαλῆ τῆς ὀρθῆς

πολιτείας καὶ πρὸς τὴν ἀληθῆ θεοσεβείαν ἄγουσαν ἐδίδαξαν, μόνα ὅσα ἀναγκαίως δεῖ φυλάττειν μηνύσαντες.<sup>410</sup>

We learn from this statement how Socrates understands the nature of the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem: In the statement that the council issued a Divine law, Socrates expresses his belief in a very high authority for this assembly. He emphasizes that the council's decision brought great freedom into the lives of Christians by liberating them from unnecessary and burdensome observances. The apostles ordered that only these precepts should be kept which lead to the true piety they were teaching.

After this explanation, the whole text of the Apostolic Decree is quoted. Here are vv. 28 and 29 of this decree in the version cited by Socrates:

ἔδοξεν γὰρ τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι καὶ ἡμῖν μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι ὑμῖν βάρος πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων, ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνείας. ἐξ ὧν διατηροῦντες ἑαυτοὺς εὖ πράξετε. ἔρρωσθε.<sup>411</sup>

Socrates' quotation of Acts 15:28-29 is very close to the Majority Text (M) and this fact is indicated by the word order in the expression “τῶν ἐπάναγκες τούτων”. This word order, apart from its occurrence in M, is found in only three other manuscripts: E L 323; NA<sup>28</sup> follows P<sup>33</sup> K<sup>2</sup> B C D<sup>1</sup> and other witnesses preferring the reading “τούτων τῶν ἐπάναγκες”.

Most interesting and noteworthy is a commentary which follows directly after the quotation of the Apostolic Decree.

<sup>410</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5:22.66-67 (GCS.NF 1,303; SC 505,234). Translation: “For when they understood that a disturbance occurred among believers on account of a dissension of the Gentiles, having all met together, they promulgated a Divine law, giving it the form of a letter. By this sanction they liberated Christians from the bondage of formal observances, and all vain contention about these things; and they taught them the path of true piety, prescribing such things only as were conducive to its attainment”: Transl. A.C. Zenos, NPNF 2-02,133.

<sup>411</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5:22.69 (GCS.NF 1,303; SC 505,234.236). Translation: “For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication; from which if ye keep yourselves, ye shall do well. Fare ye well”: Transl. A.C. Zenos, NPNF 2-02,133.

Ταῦτα μὲν ἔδοξε τῷ θεῷ· τοῦτο γάρ φησιν ἡ ἐπιστολή, ὅτι «ἔδοξεν τῷ ἁγίῳ πνεύματι μηδὲν πλέον ἐπιτίθεσθαι βάρος πλὴν τῶν ἐπάναγκες» ὀφειλόντων φυλάττεσθαι. τινὲς δὲ τούτων ἀμελήσαντες ἀδιάφορον μὲν πᾶσαν πορνείαν ἡγοῦνται, περὶ δὲ ἡμερῶν ἑορτῆς ὡς περὶ ψυχῆς ἀγωνίζονται, ἀντιστρέψαντες μὲν τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ παραγγέλματα καὶ νομοθετοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς, παρ’ οὐδὲν δὲ τὴν τῶν ἀποστόλων νομοθεσίαν τιθέμενοι, λανθάνοντες ἑαυτοὺς ὅτι ἐναντία οἷς τῷ θεῷ ἔδοξε πράττουσι.<sup>412</sup>

Socrates mentions that some individuals kept neglecting the observance of the prohibitions. Having stated this, however, he complains only about claims that fornication is a morally indifferent matter. Not only does Socrates not mention any complaints about the other three prohibitions, but he even rebukes these individuals for serious quarrels about feast days. It seems as if abstaining from fornication was for Socrates the only prohibition of importance, or at least much more important than any regulations concerning ritualistic details. In other words, the historian from Constantinople appears to make a distinction between actions morally wrong per se (e.g. fornication) and actions which, although prohibited for some reason, are morally neutral (ἀδιάφοροι), e.g. eating products offered to idols, blood or strangled animals.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 (with a short commentary).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotations: Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 4.

D) Socrates’ understanding of the prohibitions:

a) ἀπέχεσθαι εἰδωλοθύτων: Eating food offered to idols was prohibited by Apostolic Decree. Nevertheless, in Socrates’ view, such an act is probably

<sup>412</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5:22.70-71 (GCS.NF 1,304; SC 505,236). Translation: “These things indeed pleased God: for the letter expressly says, ‘It seemed good to the Holy Ghost to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.’ There are nevertheless some persons who, disregarding these precepts, suppose all fornication to be an indifferent matter; but contend about holy-days as if their lives were at stake, thus contravening the commands of God, and legislating for themselves, and making of none effect the decree of the apostles: neither do they perceive that they are themselves practicing the contrary to those things which God approved”: Transl. A.C. Zenos, NPNF 2-02,133.

morally neutral per se (ἀδιάφορος) and, accordingly, its prohibition can be regarded to be of temporary validity.

b) ἀπέχεσθαι αἵματος: Everything mentioned in sub-point “a”, applies also to blood consumption.

c) ἀπέχεσθαι πνικτῶν: Everything mentioned in sub-point “a”, applies also to eating meat of strangled animals.

d) ἀπέχεσθαι πορνείας: In Socrates’ use, fornication denotes sexual immorality although it is hard to establish how broad is this word’s semantic range in his works. Whatever the case may be, Socrates clearly expresses his belief in such acts as not being morally neutral and, therefore, as being fundamentally different from actions proscribed by the other three prohibitions.



### Chapter III. Authors referring to both Eastern and Western texts

Finally, in the third chapter of Part II we present ancient writers who appeared to refer to both versions of Acts 15:20.29 and / or 21:25. Two of them certainly made such a reference; the third one is likely to have known both forms although some doubts exist as to whether the references really show traces of his knowledge of both textual traditions. An element that unifies these three authors is their strong connection with the Italian Peninsula: Ambrosiaster probably lived and worked in Rome, similarly did Jerome before moving to Bethlehem and Gaudentius was a bishop of Brescia. We begin our analysis with the writings of Ambrosiaster.

#### 1. Ambrosiaster

Ambrosiaster (Pseudo-Ambrose) is a name used by scholars<sup>413</sup> to denote an anonymous ancient writer whose works had earlier been attributed to Ambrose or Augustine.<sup>414</sup> The works in question were written in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century, probably between 370 and 385, and were quoted by other early Christian authors, e.g. Augustine, Jerome and Pelagius.<sup>415</sup> One of these works, *Commentarius in Epistulas Paulinas*, contains a pre-Vulgate Latin text of thirteen New Testament epistles (from Romans to Philemon) as well as a detailed commentary on them.

It is in the commentary to Gal. 2,1-2 where we find a direct reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions from Acts 15. Ambrosiaster begins this commentary by explaining the background of Paul's special journey to Jerusalem. He notes that Paul's intention was to present the nature of his teaching to the apostles and people of authority in the Christian community.

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<sup>413</sup> The Benedictines of St Maur are believed to have invented this name and to use it in their edition of Ambrose's works published between 1686–1690: S. Lunn-Rockliffe, *Ambrosiaster's Political Theology* (OECS; Oxford 2007) 31.

<sup>414</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>415</sup> Ibid., 16-17.

Barnabas, a Jewish Christian and Titus, a Christian of Gentile origin were to help him in this task. Ambrosiaster mentions that this journey was undertaken by Paul in obedience to the special revelation the apostle of the Gentiles had received.<sup>416</sup>

The next part of Ambrosiaster's commentary on Gal. 2:1-2 contains a reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions, and for this reason it is quoted here *in extenso*:

*cum apostolis vero secreto contulit, ut scirent non illum discordare a regula evangelica, hoc est, ne putarent illum in vacuum currere aut cucurrisse, sicut aestimabant aliquanti ex iudaeis credentibus. nec enimaliquid ab eis discere poterat, quia a Deo fuerat instructus, sed propter concordiam et pacem Dei nutu factum est, ut tolleretur scrupulus aut suspicio fratribus aut coapostolis eius, et ut gentibus proficeret cognoscentibus quia concordabat evangelium eius cum apostolis, praeterea cum legem dedissent non molestari eos, qui ex gentibus credebant, sed ut ab his tantum observarent, id est a sanguine et fornicatione et idolatria.*<sup>417</sup>

As we can see, three prohibitions are mentioned by Ambrosiaster: abstaining from blood, from fornication and from idolatry. Putting abstention from blood ahead of the list might be explained by Ambrosiaster's wish to underline it. This is supported by the fact that the next part of the commentary is mainly focused on explaining the meaning of this particular prohibition. The Latin text reads as follows:

*nunc dicant sophistae Graecorum, qui sibi peritiam vindicant naturaliter subtilitate ingenii se vigere, quae tradita sunt gentibus observanda? quae ignorabant an quae*

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<sup>416</sup> Cf. Ambrosiaster, *Ad Gal 2,1-2* (CSEL 81/3, 17-18). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 8-9.

<sup>417</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Gal 2,1-2* (CSEL 81/3,18). Translation: "Paul had a private meeting with the apostles so that they would realize that he was not going away from the norm of the gospel, that is to say, that they would not think that he was running or had run into error, as quite a few of the Jewish believers imagined. Paul had nothing to learn from them because he had been taught directly by God, but for the sake of harmony and peace God brought this about. This was so that any hesitation or suspicion on the part of his brothers or fellow apostles might be taken away and that Gentile believers might be reassured that Paul's gospel was the same as that of the other apostles, especially after they had decreed that Gentile believers would not be disturbed as long as they kept the law by refraining from blood, from fornication and from idolatry": Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 8.

*sciebant? sed quomodo fieri potest, ut aliquis ea discat, quae novit? ergo haec illicita esse ostensa sunt gentibus, quae putabant licere; ac per hoc non utique ab homicidio prohibiti sunt, cum iubentur a sanguine observare. sed hoc acceperunt, quod Noe a Deo didicerat, ut observarent a sanguine edendo cum carne. nam quomodo fieri poterat, ut Romanis legibus imbuti, quorum tanta auctoritas in servandis mandatis (est), nescirent homicidium non esse faciendum, quippe cum [et] adulteros et homicidas et falsos testes et fures et maleficos et ceterorum malorum admissores puniant leges Romanae? denique tria haec mandata ab apostolis et senioribus data reperiuntur, quae ignorant leges Romanae, id est, ut observent se ab idolatria, a sanguine sicut Noe et a fornicatione.*<sup>418</sup>

One would expect that Ambrosiaster, having referred to the Western version of Acts 15, should interpret abstaining from blood as a prohibition of murder. However, as we can see in the text above, quite the opposite is true. Ambrosiaster understands the blood prohibition as a dietary rule and links it with a commandment given by God to Noah. He also provides us with a clear rationale behind his interpretation: It would make no sense for the apostles to forbid the Christians of Gentile origin to do something they already knew was wrong because it was forbidden even by the Roman law. And since murder was forbidden by the Roman law, abstaining from blood must be understood as referring to something else. Similarly, some other evil deeds like adultery, giving false witness or stealing were punished by the Roman law and Christians of Gentile origin, being perfectly aware of the unacceptability of such actions, did not need any additional rules in this regard.

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<sup>418</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Gal* 2,1-2 (CSEL 81/3, 18-19). Translation: "Now some clever Greeks, who boast of their natural talent for subtle arguments, might ask what exactly the Gentiles were told to do. What were they unaware of and what did they know? How can someone learn what he knows already? Therefore it must have been that they were told that certain things which they had previously thought were all right were in fact unlawful. For example, when they were told to abstain from blood, they were not being forbidden to commit murder. Rather, they were learning what Noah had also learned from God, that they should not eat raw meat. After all, how could it have been that people who were steeped in Roman law and fully committed to keeping its commandments would have been unaware that killing others was wrong, especially since Roman law punishes adulterers, murderers, false witnesses, thieves, wrongdoers and people who commit other crimes? The only answer is that these three commands which were given to them by the apostles and elders are not found in Roman law, that is, that they should keep themselves from idolatry, from blood in Noah's sense and from fornication": Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 8-9.

Thus, in this rationale, we can find a reliable clue to Ambrosiaster's understanding of the other prohibitions he mentioned. Abstaining from fornication would not mean adultery, already forbidden by the Roman law, but would mean shunning other types of sexual immorality which were not punished by the Romans. As to the Apostolic Council's prohibition of *idolatria*, we can deduce that Ambrosiaster saw the particular necessity of such a ruling due to the fact of the legality and ubiquity of polytheism in the Roman Empire. Still, in order to know more about his understanding of this prohibition, it will be necessary to analyse some statements from other writings of his. Before we do so, however, let us examine the last part of Ambrosiaster's commentary to Gal. 2:1-2:

*quae sophistae Graecorum non intelligentes, scientes tamen a sanguine abstinendum, adulterarunt scripturam quartum mandatum addentes, et a suffocato observandum. quod puto nunc dei nutu intellecturi sunt, quia iam supra dictum erat quod addiderunt.*<sup>419</sup>

Whereas two earlier quoted parts of Ambrosiaster's commentary to Gal. 2:1-2 reveal his knowledge of a Western version of Acts 15, the last part gives us evidence that he also knew the Eastern variant. Still, as it is clear from his statement, he considered the Western version of Acts 15:20.29 (but without the Golden Rule) to be genuine. The existence of an Eastern version is, according to Ambrosiaster, a result of Greeks' textual interference: Greeks, namely, were to add the prohibition of eating strangled animals because they did not understand the real meaning of abstaining from blood which already covered the content of this added prohibition. Thus, for Ambrosiaster, this addition is redundant.

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<sup>419</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Gal* 2,1-2 (CSEL 81/3, 19). Translation: "But some clever Greeks who knew about the prohibition on blood but did not understand what it meant twisted Scripture by adding a fourth commandment, to the effect that they should not eat the meat of an animal which had been strangled. I think that God let them discover this, since what they added here had already been said above": Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 9.

Returning to the question of Ambrosiaster's understanding of *idolatria*, his commentaries on 1 Cor 10:14-33 and Rom 14:1-23 are very helpful in this regard. In them, Ambrosiaster states that idolatry, i.e., worshipping of non-existing gods and at the same time denying the true God was invented by Satan.<sup>420</sup> Worshipping such gods is, in fact, worship of the devil.<sup>421</sup> An example of such worship can be found in partaking of the table of demons.<sup>422</sup> Nevertheless, eating food offered to idols is not always morally wrong. First of all, it is stated in Gen 1:31 that all things which God created are good. Consequently, the righteous patriarchs like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Isaac and Jacob did not abstain from certain kinds of food.<sup>423</sup> The food that someone offered to the idols was also created by God and belongs in reality to God, and on this ground cannot be held unclean. Therefore, for instance, meat bought in the market may be eaten without any investigation where it came from.<sup>424</sup> But the consumption of food offered to idols would be morally wrong if it scandalized another Christian or if it were giving a false impression to non-Christians that a follower of Jesus venerates idols.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad 1 Cor* 10:22 (CSEL 81/2,115). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 169.

<sup>421</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad 1 Cor* 10:19-20 (CSEL 81/2,114-115). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 168-169.

<sup>422</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad 1 Cor* 10:21 (CSEL 81/2,115). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 169.

<sup>423</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Rom* 14:2 (CSEL 81/1,433-434). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 104.

<sup>424</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad 1 Cor* 10:25 (CSEL 81/2,116-117). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 170.

<sup>425</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad 1 Cor* 10:23-24.28-29,169 (CSEL 81/2,116-118). English translation in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Romans and 1-2 Corinthians* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 169-170.

To summarize, it can be concluded that while Ambrosiaster held idolatry as absolutely unacceptable, he did not consider the consumption of food offered to idols as intrinsically evil acts. Nevertheless, such consumption may be morally wrong in some specific circumstances.

The issue of Ambrosiaster's understanding of the normativity of abstaining from blood consumption is more complex. Apart from his already quoted comment where he traced the Jerusalem Council's prohibition of blood to God's command to Noah (Gen 9:4), we find his utterance concerning blood which seems to contradict his former statement. This text is found in Ambrosiaster's *Commentary on the Letter to Titus* 1:14 and it reads as follows:

*quicquid enim adversus veritatem obponitur, humana inventio est, nescientes enim vim scripturarum et interiora verborum legis colorem sequuntur, non saporem. ideo fabulas dicuntur narrare, non veritatem. putant enim numquam recedendum ab his, quae Moyses tradidit, ut puta de escis aut coniugiis aut numeniis aut sanguine mustelae aut domo immunda septem diebus, cum sciant primores suos Abraham et Isaac et Iacob sine his iustificatos et dei amicos appellatos...*<sup>426</sup>

In this passage, while criticizing the followers of the superficial aspect of the law (symbolised by colour of the law) and not of its inner meaning (symbolised by flavour)<sup>427</sup> he provides examples of Old Testament rulings which had only temporary value and were to change in the future. These rulings include, among others, what Moses taught about food (*esca*) and

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<sup>426</sup> Ambrosiaster, *Ad Tit* 1:14 (CSEL 81/3,326). Translation: "Anything which is opposed to the truth is an invention of human beings who do not know the power of the Scriptures or their inner meaning. They follow the color of the law and not its flavor. For this reason they are said to tell tales, not the truth. They think that no one should ever abandon what Moses taught, for example, about food, matrimony, new moons, the blood of a weasel or a house which is unclean for seven days, even though they know that their ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were justified without such things and called friends of God": Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 156.

<sup>427</sup> See G.L. Bray's short comment in: Ambrosiaster, *Commentaries on Galatians – Philemon* (ed. & transl. G.L. Bray) (ACT; Downers Grove, IL 2009) 156, n.5.

about the blood of a weasel (*sanguinis mustelae*)<sup>428</sup>. Nevertheless, the latter expression is highly enigmatic, mainly because it does not occur anywhere, not only in the Pentateuch, but even in the whole Hebrew Bible. Moreover, the very word “weasel” occurs only once in the Pentateuch, and only in its Greek and Latin version. Finally, it is not clear what action is meant by Ambrosiaster with regard to blood in the above expression. It does not necessarily need to be its consumption; he may simply mean e.g. pouring blood or putting blood on something. The latter possibility is supported by two variant readings which in place of *sanguine mustelae* read *sanguine hostiae*<sup>429</sup> (blood of a victim). This expression is found in the Pentateuch and is associated there with putting or pouring blood.

In conclusion, we can only state with certainty that for Ambrosiaster blood consumption prohibition was binding Christians in apostolic times. It is not certain, however, if Ambrosiaster held this prohibition as valid for his times and for the future.

#### Summary:

A) Verses quoted: There is no direct quotation, but a reference to the prohibitions.

B) Textual version: Western (held to be authentic) and Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 3 in the Western version, 4 in the Eastern version.

D) Ambrosiaster’s understanding of the prohibitions:

a) *Abstinere ab idolatria*: Shunning all kinds of idolatry. Eating food offered to idols is prohibited if it is a part of a polytheistic ritual (“partaking in the table of demons”), if it scandalizes others or if it gives a false impression

<sup>428</sup> It occurs in Lev 11:29. The Greek term γαλιῆ and the Latin term *mustela* (both meaning a weasel) are counterparts of the Hebrew term דָּחַל, which is a *hapax legomenon* in the Hebrew Bible and is usually rendered as “a mole”.

<sup>429</sup> *Codex Caroliruhensis Aug. XCVII* and *Codex Sangallensis 330*, both from the 9th cent.: Ambrosiaster, *Ad Tit* 1:14 (CSEL 81/3, 2.326).

of worshipping idols. In other situations, such consumption does not pose moral problems.

b) *Abstinere a sanguine*: Prohibition of eating blood and strangled animals. It is not certain what Ambrosiaster's opinion was about the normativity of this prohibition in his times.

c) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Prohibition of sexual immorality which was not forbidden by Roman law.

d) *Abstinere a suffocato*: Prohibition of eating strangled animals. According to Ambrosiaster, this formulation is not genuinely of apostolic origin because it is redundant: the precept of abstaining from blood covers abstaining from strangled animals. He attributes the explicit formulation of a *suffocato* to Greeks' ignorance with regard to the real meaning of a blood consumption prohibition.

## 2. Gaudentius of Brescia

Next, we need to analyse the relevant writings of Gaudentius. Gaudentius (died ca. 410) was probably a native of Brescia. During his pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he received the message about the death of Philastrius, the bishop of Brescia and was informed about the unanimous decision of the clergy and people of Brescia to elect him as Philastrius' successor. Initially unwilling to accept this election, he eventually returned to his home town and was ordained bishop probably in the year 387. Gaudentius started to write down his sermons after he had received a request to do so from a certain Benivolus who due to illness was not able to attend the church and listen to the bishop's homilies. Gaudentius wrote in total 21 sermons and treatises.<sup>430</sup>

Among his works, *Sermon XV* is of particular importance for the current project, even if its title, *De natali Machabaeorum*, is far from

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<sup>430</sup> J. Nirschl, *Lehrbuch der Patrologie und Patristik II* (Mainz 1883) 488.



suggesting it. In this homily, Gaudentius provides his comment on the story taken from 2 Macc 7:1-42 where seven brothers and their mother were put to death because of their refusal to eat pork forbidden by the Mosaic Law. This theme brought him to a comment on the dietary rules of the Torah and, subsequently, to quoting and commenting on a thematically linked New Testament text: Acts 15:29. Here is his citation of this verse with the preceding introductory sentence:

*Et idcirco beatus Jacobus cum caeteris Apostolis decretum tale constituit in Ecclesiis observandum: "Ut abstineatis vos", inquit, "ab immolatis, et a fornicatione, et a sanguine, id est a suffocatis".*<sup>431</sup>

As we see, there are some peculiarities in this quotation. First, the order, in which the prohibitions are enumerated, does not follow the order known from Acts 15:29 where *fornicatio* is mentioned as the last, not the second prohibition. Second, it has to be noted that the term *a suffocatis* is present in the above mentioned quotation, but it appears to be used as an explanation of *a sanguine*, and not as a separate prohibition. Thus, the problem that emerges here is as follows: What version of Acts 15:29 did Gaudentius know: the Eastern one, the Western one or both? With regard to this dilemma, the following can be observed:

A) Gaudentius' provenance from Italy and his use of Latin language suggest that he could have known the Western version of Acts 15:29. Almost all other ancient Latin authors from the West who quoted the Apostolic Council's prohibitions, knew the Western text.<sup>432</sup> A lack of the Golden Rule in his quotation is not a proof to the contrary (as already mentioned above, Pacian, who did not cite the Golden Rule, clearly knew the Western version).

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<sup>431</sup> Gaudentius of Brescia, *Sermo XV: Die natali Machabaeorum* (PL 20,953-954). Translation: "And, therefore, blessed James with other Apostles issued such a decree to be observed in the Churches: That you may abstain, he says, from sacrifices and from sexual immorality, and from blood, i.e. from strangled animals" (translation mine).

<sup>432</sup> Cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 3.12,14; Tertullian, *Pud.* 12,3-5; Cyprian, *Quir.* 119,4-8; Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,3; Jerome, *Ad Iovinianum* 1,34; Augustine, *Contra Faustum Manichaeum* 32,13. John Cassian is the probably the only exception here.

B) Gaudentius' visits in the Eastern Roman Empire<sup>433</sup> and his probable knowledge of Greek<sup>434</sup> suggest that he could have known the Eastern version of Acts.

C) Taking the above mentioned arguments into account, it seems plausible that Gaudentius knew both versions of Acts 15:29 and merged them together in his quotation treating *a suffocatis* as an explanation of *a sanguine*.

As Gaudentius' commentary on the prohibitions might be helpful in finding a satisfactory solution to this dilemma, we shall present it and analyse it first. After citing Acts 15:29, the bishop of Brescia writes:

*Praetermiserunt homicidium, adulterium, veneficia, quoniam nec nominari ea in ecclesiis oporteret quae legibus etiam Gentilium punirentur: praetermiserunt quoque illas omnes minutias observationum legalium, et sola haec quae praediximus, custodienda sanxerunt, ne vel sacrificatis diabolo cibis profanemur immundis, vel ne emortuo per viscera suffocatorum animalium sanguine polluamur, vel ne immunditiis fornicationum corpora nostra, quae templa Dei sunt, violemus. Sic ergo permiserunt omnia manducari, ut fornicationem praeciperent fugiendam.*<sup>435</sup>

Gaudentius begins his commentary with a statement clarifying what the Apostolic Decree is not about. According to him, the prohibitions from Acts 15:29 cannot be related to murder, adultery or sorcery in any way. The necessity of not committing such acts was, in Gaudentius' judgement, obvious not only for Christians, but also for pagans whose laws punished these types of behaviour. Consequently, there was no point in mentioning them in a special decree for Christians converting from paganism.

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<sup>433</sup> J. Nirschl, *Lehrbuch*, 488.

<sup>434</sup> We can deduce it from the fact that John Chrysostom wrote a personal letter to Gaudentius in Greek (the text of the letter can be found in PG 52,715-716).

<sup>435</sup> Gaudentius of Brescia, *Sermo XV. De diversis capitulis quintus: Die natali Machabaeorum* (PL 20,954). Translation: "They omitted murder, adultery, sorcery because it was not necessary to mention in the Churches the acts which were punished also by Gentile laws: they also omitted all those trifles from legal observances and only these ones which we mentioned above they decreed to be kept so that we may not be profaned by unclean food offered to the devil nor be defiled by dead blood all over the entrails of strangled animals, nor violate our bodies which are the temples of God with the filth of sexual immorality. Thus, they allowed [us] to eat everything so that they may enjoin [on us] a rule to shun fornication" (translation mine).

Next, the bishop of Brescia states that the Apostolic Council did not bind the converts from paganism to keep all the tiny prescriptions of the Mosaic Law, with the exception of the ones mentioned in his quotation from the Apostolic Decree. Thus, it can be noted that Gaudentius regards the prohibitions from Acts 15:29 as a part of the Law of the Torah, which was decided to be binding also for non-Jewish converts to Christianity. The necessity of keeping these prohibitions was not obvious to the people who had been raised as pagans, and for this reason, they had to be made aware of it by a special decree.

How does Gaudentius understand the meaning of these prohibitions and how does he explain the Jerusalem Council's decision to oblige Christians to observe them? First, he explains abstaining from sacrifices. According to his interpretation, it is a dietary rule forbidding Christians to consume food offered during pagan worship. The reason for this is as follows: These sacrifices were in fact offered to the devil and eating the devil's food desecrates the body of a Christian which, as Gaudentius remarks in his comment on abstaining from *fornicatio*, is the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Next Gaudentius comments on the meaning of abstaining from blood, thereby not following the order of the prohibitions in his quotation, but following the order from the majority of the oldest Greek and Latin manuscripts of Acts 15:29. This prescription is in his opinion of a dietary nature: Christians have to abstain from the consumption of strangled animal and the blood remaining in them. The reason for this is to avoid defilement; nevertheless, it is not clear what kind of defilement Gaudentius means, nor is it certain why, according to him, eating blood and strangled animals would cause any sort of defilement.

Finally, as far as *fornicatio* is concerned, Gaudentius' view on its meaning can be described as stricter rather than broader. In his opinion, it denotes all kinds of sexual immorality, with an exception of adultery whose

moral wrongfulness was obvious for both pagans and Jews so there was no need for the Jerusalem Council to teach about it. The bishop of Brescia motivates the necessity of not committing sexual immorality with the need to prevent the body of a Christian which is the temple of the Holy Spirit from being violated.

The way Gaudentius summarizes these explanations seems a little startling. He states that the apostles allowed Christians to eat everything although he has just mentioned the necessity to abstain from eating sacrifices and strangled animals. Perhaps he wants to emphasize the joyful message of the Apostolic Decree: Christians are not bound by Jewish dietary regulations. Even if they still have to abstain from the consumption of pagan offerings and animals with blood, the number of dietary prescriptions from whose observance they were released is so huge, that these two small exceptions do not revoke the rule of food liberty. This liberty, as it appears, was introduced for a reason: to allow Christians to save their forces and utilize them for shunning sexual immorality.

After this summarizing remark, Gaudentius continues with clarification of some other issues pertaining to food liberty. He notes that this liberty has to be well used and not abused (*utendum est ciborum licentia non abutendum*). This statement expresses Gaudentius' understanding of another New Testament text also quoted by him in the same sermon. The text in question, Rom. 14:20-21, acknowledges the cleanness of all kinds of food, but emphasizes at the same time the necessity of avoiding scandalizing others. By citing this biblical fragment, Gaudentius once again expresses his conviction that the permission to eat all kinds food remains in force, but is not without exceptions.

Gaudentius also mentions food offered to idols in his *Sermon IV* about Exodus. He writes:

*Vos igitur, neophyti, qui estis ad beatae hujus ac spiritualis paschae epulas invitati, videte quomodo ab omni pollutione escarum quas superstitio gentilis infecit, vestras animas conservetis. Nec sufficit ut a mortifero daemonum cibo vitam suam custodiat Christianus; sed ut omnia abominamenta Gentilium, et omnes idololatriae tramites, sicut quaedam serpentis diaboli venena, diffugiat. (...) Nam gulae sue causa primum coeperunt homines prandia mortuis praeparare, quae ipsi comederent; post hoc etiam sacrificia ausi sunt eis sacrilega celebrare, quamvis nec ipsi mortuis suis munus sacrificent qui exercent parentalia, dum super sepulchrorum mensas tremulis ebrietate manibus vina fundentes, spiritum sitire balbutiunt.*<sup>436</sup>

The bishop of Brescia teaches neophytes not to eat food offered in pagan sacrifices because such alimentary products have effectively been offered to demons. Gaudentius, similarly to Cyprian of Carthage (*De lapsis* 25), emphasizes the contrast between food offered to idols as a demoniac meal which has to be rejected and a paschal meal, the meal of the Lord, to which neophytes are invited. Moreover, Gaudentius criticizes the custom of offering food in honour of the deceased.

To sum up, it can be concluded that Gaudentius treats abstaining from pagan sacrificial food and abstaining from blood/strangled animals as exceptions to the rule of freedom from Mosaic food regulations. As to abstaining from *fornicatio*, it denotes shunning all types of sexual immorality apart from adultery which, nevertheless, should be shunned on other grounds.

Summary:

A) Verses quoted: Acts 15:29 with a commentary on the prohibitions.

<sup>436</sup> Gaudentius, *Sermo IV. De Exodi lectione quartus* (PL 20,870-871). Translation: "Therefore, you neophytes, who are invited to the meal of this blessed and spiritual passover, discern in what manner you may preserve your souls from all pollution of dishes which were stained by the superstition of the Gentiles. It is also not sufficient for a Christian to protect his life from the death-bringing food of demons, but he must flee from all abominations of the Gentiles and all sideways of idolatry as a kind of a serpent's (devil's) poison. (...) For it was because of their throats that the people first began to prepare food for the dead, which they ate themselves; afterwards they also dared to honour them with impious sacrifices. These who practice *parentalia* not [even] offer funeral to their own dead while at the same time on the altars of the tombs, pouring wine with their hands shaking from drunkenness, babble that the ghost wants to drink" (translation mine).

B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Probably combination of both Western and Eastern.

C) Number of prohibitions: 3.

D) Gaudentius' understanding of the prohibitions:

a) *Abstinere ab immolatis*: Abstaining from consumption of pagan sacrifices.

b) *Abstinere a fornicatione*: Shunning sexual immorality different than adultery (adultery should also be shunned, but there is a different commandment for it).

c) *Abstinere a sanguine, id est a suffocatis*: Abstaining from consumption of blood and strangled animals.

### 3. Jerome of Stridon

We finish Part II of this thesis with the analysis of the works of Jerome, one of the greatest Bible translators and exegetes in antiquity. Jerome was born in 347 in Stridon in the Roman Province of Dalmatia. He began his work as a scholar, a writer and a translator in Rome and continued it in Bethlehem where he spent the last 34 years of his life (died 420). Although he was such a prolific author of many biblical commentaries, homilies and translations, he did not manage to write a commentary to the Acts of the Apostles. Nonetheless, we find four references to Acts 15:29 in three other texts.

The first two of these references are found in Jerome's *Commentary to the Letter of Paul to Galatians* which was written about 387. One of them is located in Chapter 2 of Book I and it reads:

(1) ...propterea Paulus et Barnabas de re manifesta quasi dubia se mitti passi sint (2) Hierosolymam ut maiorum quoque iudicio Euangelii gratia confirmata credentibus probaretur (3) et nulli resideret ultra dubitatio circumcisionis omissae, cum apostolorum esset litteris (4) imperatum iugum legis ab his qui in Christum ex gentibus crediderant auferendum.<sup>437</sup>

<sup>437</sup> Jerome, *Com. Gal* 1.2.1-2 (CCL 77A,42-43). Textual notes: (1) *sint* : *sunt* CHNSZedd. and G (before correction); (3) *omissae cum* : *omnis secum* HF; (4) *imperatum*:*imperarum*

This text contains only a generic reference to the apostolic letter from Acts 15. Jerome does not mention prohibitions at all, instead he emphasizes the very liberating character of the apostolic letter removing the burden of the law for Christians of Gentile origin.

Next, in the same commentary, in Chapter 5 of Book II we read:

(1) *Et in Actibus Apostolorum narrat historia, cum quidam de circumcissione surgentes* (2) *adseruissent eos qui ex gentibus crediderant debere circumcidi et legem custodire Moysi,* (3) *seniores qui Hierosolymis erant et apostolos pariter congregatos statuisset per litteras, ne* (4) *superponeretur eis iugum legis nec amplius obseruarent nisi ut custodirent se tantum ab* (5) *idolothytis et sanguine et fornicatione siue, ut in nonnullis exemplaribus scriptum est, et a suffocatis.*<sup>438</sup>

In this very clear reference to the prohibitions from Acts 15, Jerome manifests his awareness of the fact that the word *suffocatis* is not found in all the manuscripts he knew. Thus, we find evidence of his acquaintance with

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Mig.<sup>2</sup>; *Christum* : *christo* DA; *ex gentibus crediderant* : *crediderant ex gentibus* edd.: Ibid. 42-43. Manuscript abbreviations are explained in the next footnote. Translation: "...the reason Paul and Barnabas allowed themselves to be sent to Jerusalem concerning this public issue, as if it were a doubtful matter, was so that, by a judgement of the elders too, the grace of the gospel would be proven to be confirmed to the believers and no further doubt would remain in anyone about omitting circumcision. For it was commanded in a letter from the apostles that the yoke of the law was to be removed from those who had believed in Christ from the Gentiles": Transl. T.P. Scheck (ed.), *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus and Philemon* (Notre Dame, IN 2010) 87-88.

<sup>438</sup> Jerome, *Com. Gal* 2.5.2 (CCL 77A,149). Textual notes: (1) *Et* is omitted by DEQCA; (3) *et* is put before *seniores* by GI; *qui* is followed by *in* in DEQCAGI; *apostolos* : *apostolus* DEN; *congregatos* : *congregatur* E; (5) *et* is omitted by DEQCA: Jerome, *Comm in Gal* 2.5.2 (CCL 77A, 149). Explanation of the manuscript abbreviations: A: C 118 inf. from Milan (12<sup>th</sup> cent.), C: Lat. 14850 from Paris (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), D: Lat. 1002 from Vienna (8<sup>th</sup>/9<sup>th</sup> cent.), E: Vat. lat. 340 from Vatican (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); F: Sess. 39 + Sess. 96 from Rome (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> cent.); G: 128 from Sankt-Gallen (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), H: Lat. 9531 from Paris (10<sup>th</sup> cent.); I: Lat. 1760 from Paris (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> cent.), N: 28. Weissen. from Wolfenbüttel (9<sup>th</sup> cent.), Mig.<sup>2</sup>: *Patrologia Latina* 265 (Parisii 1865) 331-468; Q: fMS TYP 495 from Cambridge (9<sup>th</sup> cent.); S: 504 from Rome (10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> cent.); Z: 5504-12, d. 1-95 from Brussels (11<sup>th</sup> cent.); *edd.*: consensus of 5 important editions (Editio Erasmi; Editio Mariani Victorii; Editio Johannis Martianay; Editio Vallarsi, Mig.): G. Raspanti, CCL 77A,2-3. More about these and other manuscripts of Jerome's *Comm in Gal* in: Ibid., VII-CLXVIII. Translation: "And in the Acts of the Apostles, history narrates that when certain ones arose from the circumcision and claimed that those who had believed from the Gentiles ought to be circumcised and to keep the law of Moses, the elders who were in Jerusalem and the apostles who were equally gathered together decreed through a letter that the yoke of the law was not to be placed upon them; nor were they to observe it any further except merely to keep themselves from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from fornication, or, as is written in some copies, from strangled things": Transl. T.P. Scheck, *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus and Philemon*, 197.

both Eastern and Western texts of the verse in question. Nevertheless, in this passage Jerome does not reveal anything about his understanding of the prohibitions.

Jerome's next reference to the prohibitions occurs in his literary work *Adversus Iovinianum* composed about the year 393. In Book I of this polemic, we read:

*Denique et apostoli et seniores de Hierosolymis litteras mittunt, ut non amplius imponatur oneris his qui de gentibus crediderunt nisi ut abstineant se ab idololatria, et fornicatione, et a sanguine, et a suffocatis; et quasi parvulis atque infantibus lac potum dant, non solidum cibum; nec praecipiant de continentia, nec de virginitate significant, nec ad jejunia provocant, neque dicunt illud quod in Evangelio ad apostolos diriguntur, ne habeant duas tunicas, ne peram, ne aes in zonis, ne virgam in manu, ne calceamenta in pedibus, aut certe illud: Si vis perfectus esse, vade et vende omnia tua et da pauperibus: et veni, sequere me (Matt 19,24).<sup>439</sup>*

As we can see, in this reference Jerome enumerates all four prohibitions without making any textual comment on *suffocatis*. This fact may suggest that at that stage Jerome reached certainty with regard to the originality of the Eastern version of Acts 15:20.29. It can also be noted that the prohibition rendered as *custodire ab idololatriis* in the previous reference, this time is named with a more general term *abstinere ab idololatria*. In this reference, Jerome does not explain the meanings of the prohibitions, either. Instead, he expresses his view about the reason for which the prohibitions were introduced. They were, namely, given to Christians of Gentile origin as, in Jerome's words (with an allusion to 1 Cor 3:2), milk is given to infants who are not yet able to eat solid food. It seems that in Jerome's understanding,

<sup>439</sup> Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum*, 1.34 (PL 23,268). Translation: "Then, again, the Apostles and elders wrote letters from Jerusalem that no heavier burden should be laid on Gentile believers than that they should keep themselves from idolatry, and from fornication, (and from blood)\*, and from things strangled. As though they were providing for infant children, they gave them milk to drink, not solid food. Nor did they lay down rules for continence, nor hint at virginity, nor urge to fasting, nor repeat the directions given in the Gospel to the Apostles, not to have two tunics, nor scrip, nor money in their girdles, nor staff in their hand, nor shoes on their feet. And they certainly did not bid them, if they wished to be perfect, go and sell all that they had and give to the poor, and 'come follow me'": Transl. W.H. Fremantle – G. Lewis – W.G. Martley, NPNF 2-06,371.

\*These words do not occur in the above translation probably by mistake.



these four prohibitions contained the basic requirements that the newly converted Christians had to fulfil, probably not all the basic requirements (as we shall see below), but only the ones which were new for former pagans. Thus, the newly converted Christians, bound to observe only basic necessary rules of Christian conduct, did not have to be preoccupied about things metaphorically labelled by Jerome as “solid food”: continence, virginity, fasting, directions given to apostles before their apostolic mission or the way to perfection proposed to the young man from Matt 19:21.

The next part of Jerome’s polemic reveals even more details with regard to his understanding of the prohibitions. Continuing the thought about the rich young man who met with Jesus, he writes:

*Si enim adolescens ille qui se jactaverat cuncta fecisse quae legis sunt, audiens hoc, tristis abiit, quia habebat possessiones multas, et Pharisei hujusmodi Domini sententiam subsannabant: quanto magis tanta gentium multitudo, cui summa virtus erat aliena non rapere, non habebat necesse praeceptum de castitate et continentia perpetua, quibus scribebatur ut abstinerent se ab idolis, et a fornicatione, et in quibus audiebatur fornicatio, et talis fornicatio, quae ne inter gentes quidem est!*<sup>440</sup>

In this passage, Jerome uses an *a fortiori* reasoning to explain why new Christians of Gentile origin were given less rules to observe: if the young man from the Gospel who had been observing all the commandments for years, did not accept Jesus’ invitation to leave everything and follow him, much less would the new converts do it. According to Jerome, these converts were not yet able to do it because, they were not sufficiently spiritually advanced (as he puts it in a straightforward way, “their highest virtue consisted of not robbing each other”). Here we find a hint that the basic

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<sup>440</sup> Jerome, *Adversus Iovinianum*, 1.34 (PL 23,268). Translation: “For if the young man who boasted of having done all that the law enjoins, when he heard this went away sorrowful, because he had great possessions, and the Pharisees derided an utterance such as this from our Lord’s lips: how much more would the vast multitude of Gentiles, whose highest virtue consisted in not plundering another’s goods, have repudiated the obligation of perpetual chastity and continence, when they were told in the letter to keep themselves from idols, and from fornication, seeing that fornication was heard of among them, and such fornication as was not ‘even among the Gentiles’”: Transl. W.H. Fremantle – G. Lewis – W.G. Martley, NPNF 2-6,371.

standard of behaviour expected from all new converts was broader than the simple observance of the apostolic prohibitions. It is reasonable to assume that these converts were also required to be faithful in observing other commandments, with which they were already familiar and which were in line with the Christian way of life, e.g. prohibition of stealing etc.

The next clear reference to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions in the writings of Jerome occurs in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*. The reference appears within his explanation of Ez 44:31:

*Omne morticinum et captum a bestia de auibus et pecoribus non comedent sacerdotes.*<sup>441</sup>

This ruling in Ez is a reminder of a commandment from Lev 22:8 where priests are forbidden to eat animals that died a natural death or were torn by other animals.<sup>442</sup> Let us see in what way Jerome interprets it and how it relates to the Apostolic Council's prohibitions:

(1) ...et iuxta litteram, omni generi electo, regali et sacerdotali – quod proprie ad christianos (2) refertur, qui uncti sunt oleo spiritali de quo scriptum est: 'Vnxit te Deus, Deus tuus, oleo (3) exsultationis prae participibus tuis' (Ps. XLIV,8) – haec praecepta conueniunt : ut (4) 'morticinum' non comedat tam de auibus quam de pecoribus cuius nequaquam sanguis (5) effusus est – quod in Actibus apostolorum dicitur 'suffocatum'; et quae necessario (6) obseruanda, apostolorum de Hierusalem epistola monet – et captum a bestia, quia et ipsum (7) similiter suffocatum est : et condemnat sacerdotes, qui in turdis, ficedulis, gliribus, et (8) ceteris huiuscemodi haec auiditate gulae non custodiunt.<sup>443</sup>

<sup>441</sup> Jerome, *Com. Ez* 14:44 (CCL 75,669). Textual note: *pecoribus*: Ibid., 669. Translation: "The priests shall not eat any bird or beast that died of itself or was torn by animals" (translation mine).

<sup>442</sup> In Lev 17:15 all Israelites and foreigners living with them are required to abstain from anything that died of itself or was torn by beasts. But in Deut 14:21 foreigners are allowed to eat animals which died a natural death.

<sup>443</sup> Jerome, *Com. Ez* 14:44 (CCL 75,669-670). Textual notes: (3) *participibus* : *particibus* K; *haec* : *he* K; (6) *quia* : *qui* K: Ibid., 669-670. Abbreviations of the manuscripts and printed editions: K: *Codex Coloniensis* 51 (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> cent.): Ibid., XIX. Translation: "In accordance with the literal meaning, these precepts affect every chosen person, a king or a priest. And this, properly speaking, refers to Christians who are anointed with spiritual oil, about whom it is written: "God, your God anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions" (Ps 45 [44]:8) in order that they may not eat anything that died of itself, be it a bird or a beast whose blood has not been poured out, what is called *suffocatum* (strangled) in the Acts of

First it should be noted that Jerome interprets the word *sacerdotes* who must abstain from *morticinum* and *captum a bestia* in a very broad way: not only Aaronic priests are the addressees of this commandment, but every person who can be labelled an elect, what, in Jerome's view, refers especially to every Christian. Thus, no Christian may eat meat of an animal that died of itself nor meat of an animal torn by beasts. Jerome identifies both of these categories with *suffocatum* mentioned in Acts 15.20.29, most probably on the grounds that the things denoted by all these expressions have one common denominator: presence of blood that has not been poured out. Consequently, Jerome holds the Jerusalem Council's dietary proscription of eating strangled animals as still valid for Christians in his time. The same conclusion applies to blood prohibition understood by Jerome in this passage as a dietary rule. Nevertheless, we can infer from the final words of the above-quoted text that not all the priests known to him shared his opinion about the binding force of these dietary proscriptions. As to the other prohibitions issued by the Apostolic Council, Jerome states, without going into details, that they must be observed.

It is noteworthy to examine yet another passage from Jerome's writings which is relevant to our topic through a thematic link with it. This text is found in Jerome's Commentary on Titus, namely on Titus 1:15 which reads:

*Omnia munda mundis, coinquinatis autem et infidelibus nihil mundum, sed polluta est eorum et mens et conscientia.*<sup>444</sup>

Jerome informs us how he understands these words in the following statement:

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the Apostles and observe the things that according to the letter of the apostles from Jerusalem are necessary to observe. Neither shall they eat anything torn by animals because it also belongs to the group of *suffocatum*. This letter condemns the priests who, succumbing to gluttonous desires, do not observe these precepts with regard to thrushes, fig-peckers, dormice and similar animals" (translation mine).

<sup>444</sup> Jerome, *Com. Tit* 1.15 (CCL 77C,34). Translation: "To the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but both their mind and conscience is polluted": Transl. T.P. Scheck, *St. Jerome's Commentaries on Galatians, Titus and Philemon*, 310.

*‘Omnia munda mundis’, his uidelicet qui in Christo credunt, et sciunt omnem creaturam bonam esse et nihil abiciendum quod cum gratiarum actione percipitur; ‘Coinquinatis autem et infidelibus nihil mundum’ quia ‘polluta est eorum et mens et conscientia’; propterea etiam quae munda sunt per naturam, eis immunda fiunt, non quo uel mundum sit aliquid uel immundum, sed pro qualitate uescientium et mundum mundis et immundum contaminatis fiat; alioquin infideles quosque atque pollutos etiam panis benedictionis et calix dominicus non iuuat, quia qui indigne comederit de pane illo et de calice biberit iudicium sibi manducat et bibit. Aduentu Christi purgata sunt omnia. Quae ille mundauit, nos communicare non possumus.*<sup>445</sup>

Jerome explains that, on the one hand, the inner disposition of a person is important: if someone is morally pure then all things will be pure to him and if someone is morally impure then everything will be unclean to him. Alluding to 1 Cor 11:29, Jerome states that even receiving *the bread of benediction* and *the Lord’s cup* would be an impure practice to someone who is impure inside. On the other hand, Jerome acknowledges that all things are in reality clean thanks to the coming of Christ. Thus, one would be inclined to think that in this commentary Jerome does not hold the dietary prohibitions of the Apostolic Council as binding for persons who can be considered pure inside. But, as we can see in the next part of the above-quoted text, such a conclusion would be too hasty. The part in question reads as follows:

*Sed considerandum ne ista tractantes, occasionem illi haeresi demus, quae juxta Apocalypsim, et ipsum quoque apostolum Paulum scribentem ad Corinthios, putat de idolothytis esse vescendum: “quia omnia munda sunt mundis”. Nunc enim Apostolo non fuit propositum de his quae immolantur daemonibus disputare: sed aduersus Judaeos, qui secundum Legis abolitae disciplinam, quaedam munda, quaedam arbitrabantur immunda. “Non enim”, inquit, “possumus mensae Domini participare, et mensae daemoniorum: nec ualemus simul bibere calicem Domini, et calicem daemoniorum” (1 Cor 10:20.21). In nobis itaque est comedere vel munda, vel immunda. Si enim mundi sumus, munda nobis est creatura. Si autem immundi et*

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<sup>445</sup> Jerome, *Com. Tit* 1.15 (CCL 77C,35). Translation: “To the pure all things are pure, namely, to those who believe in Christ and know that every created thing is good and nothing is to be rejected that is received with thanksgiving. But to the defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure because their mind and conscience are polluted. Therefore even what is pure by nature becomes impure to them. It is not that something becomes either pure or impure, but in view of the nature of those eating, it becomes pure to the pure and impure to the defiled. In any case, even the bread of benediction and the Lord’s cup does not help any unbelievers and defiled, since the one who eats of that bread and drinks of the cup unworthily eats and drinks judgment upon himself. At the coming of Christ all things have been cleansed. What he cleansed, we cannot make common”: Transl. T.P. Scheck, *St. Jerome’s Commentaries on Galatians, Titus and Philemon*, 310-311.

*infideles, fiunt nobis universa communia : sive per inhabitantem in cordibus nostris haeresim, sive per conscientiam delictorum.*<sup>446</sup>

In the passage above, Jerome presents his position on eating the offerings to idols. He strongly opposes an opinion that allows consumption of the pagan sacrifices on the grounds that “to the pure all things are pure”. According to Jerome, these words were not meant to condone the practice of eating sacrifices to idols, these words were written as a polemic with the Jews who still insisted on the division between clean and unclean food. Moreover, Jerome refers to other biblical verses which in his view prove his point: Rev 2:14 and 1 Cor 10:20.21.

Thus, in Jerome’s understanding, the prohibition of consumption of pagan sacrifices is an exception to the rule that “to the pure all things are pure”, not in the sense that such food is unclean in itself, but that its eating is a form of participation in a pagan cult which can never be considered pure. In the light of his *Comm in Ez* quoted above, we can conclude that the other two dietary prohibitions from Acts 15:29 are probably subject to the similar interpretation.

Summary:

- A) Verses referred to: Acts 15:29.
- B) Textual version of the biblical quotation: Western and Eastern.
- C) Number of prohibitions: 0, 3+1,4,2,1.

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<sup>446</sup> Jerome, *Com. Tit* 1.15 (CCL 77C,35-36). Translation: “But one should take heed that in treating these matters we do not give opportunity to that heresy which, according to the Apocalypse and according to the apostle himself too when writing to the Corinthians, thinks that one should eat from things sacrificed to idols, since *to the pure all things are pure*. For the apostle did not at this time propose to discuss those things that are sacrificed to demons. Instead, his discussion is directed against the Jews who think that certain things are pure, others impure, in accordance with the discipline of the abolished law. He says, *For we cannot be sharers in the table of the Lord and the table of demons; nor can we simultaneously drink the Lord’s cup and the cup of demons*. And so to eat either pure or impure things lies in us. For if we are pure, to us the created thing is pure. But if on the other hand we are impure and unbelieving, everything becomes common to us, either through the heresy inhabiting our hearts or through the consciousness of transgressions”: Transl. T.P. Scheck, *St. Jerome’s Commentaries on Galatians, Titus and Philemon*, 311-312.

D) Jerome's understanding of the prohibitions:

- a) *Ut custodirent / abstineant / abstinerent se (tantum) ab idolothytis / idololatria / idolis*: Abstaining from idolatry which includes abstaining from consumption of pagan sacrifices due to its close association with pagan cult.
- b) *Ut custodirent / abstineant / abstinerent se a fornicatione*: Shunning all types of sexual immorality.
- c) *Ut custodirent / abstineant se a sanguine*: Abstaining from blood consumption, perhaps to avoid gluttony and association with demons.
- d) *Ut custodirent / abstineant se a suffocatis*: Abstaining from consumption of strangled animals, perhaps to avoid gluttony and association with demons.

### Part III

#### A synthesis of ancient interpretations of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25.

Having analysed the early Christian texts referring to the prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, an attempt is be made to write a synthesis of the results of the above analyses. First, ancient authors' views on the meaning of the prohibitions are summarized. Next, on the basis of these results, we present and juxtapose their opinions about the normativity of the prohibitions. Finally, after the presentation of different views with regard to the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions, we aim at reflecting on the relationship of these opinions with the biblical variant of the proscriptions in question to which a given author referred.

## Chapter I. Ancient authors' understanding of the meaning of the prohibitions

In this chapter, we aim at summarizing and juxtaposing different views of early Christian writers with respect to the meaning of the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions. These views have already been presented in Part II, but in an individual manner and without comparison with the opinions of other authors.

### 1. Meaning of abstaining from offerings to idols

It is possible to group early Christian interpretations of the first prohibition from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 in three categories:

a) The first prohibition proscribes idolatry in general.

Four ancient writers share this opinion: Tertullian, Cyprian (probably), Pacian and Ambrosiaster (probably). All of them came from the Western part of the Roman Empire, all of them wrote in Latin and all of them knew the Western version of Acts 15 (although, as we have seen, Ambrosiaster knew the Eastern version as well, but considered the Western one to be original). Three of them used the broad term *idololatria* / *idolatria* when quoting or referring to the first prohibition of the Apostolic Council (the term *sacrificia* also employed by Tertullian seemed to be used by him as a metonymy or even a synonym of idolatry). Only Pacian in his quotation of Acts 15:29 uses the term *idolothyta* not *idolatria*; nevertheless, we can infer from his commentary that he understood the first prohibition as abstaining from all acts of idolatry, not just from consumption of pagan sacrifices.

b) The first prohibition proscribes consumption of food offered to idols.

A great number of ancient writers can be counted as supporting this view. The majority of them came from the Eastern part of Roman Empire:



Clement of Alexandria, Origen, the final redactor of *Pseudo-Clementines*, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius of Salamis, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, Socrates of Constantinople, Hesychius of Jerusalem, members of the Council of Gangra and two of them from the Western part: Gaudentius of Brescia and Augustine. This opinion was also probably shared by Ephrem. The terms used to denote the content of the first prohibition oscillated between εἰδωλόθυτον / εἰδωλόθυτα in Greek and (*idolis*) *immolatum* / *immolata* (*simulacrorum*) / *haec quae idolis immolantur* in Latin. A number of these authors emphasized that food is good in its nature (e.g., Clement of Alexandria, Origen), but if it was offered to idols, it must be shunned because its wilful consumption will be an act of idolatry (e.g., Augustine, Gaudentius, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Jerusalem). A number of the authors also name other reasons why abstaining from food offered to idols is necessary. These are mainly a scandal (Clement of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, John Chrysostom), an association of such consumption with gluttony (Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Theodoret of Cyrus) or simply obedience to the clear apostolic command (Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom). Hesychius, while supporting the literal observance of abstaining from eating sacrifices, he found this observance to have a deeper, metaphorical meaning. Two writers belonging to this group, Cyril of Alexandria and Socrates, appear to treat the first prohibition as a historical order rather than a contemporarily binding command. Cyril explains that the goal of the command was to teach new converts of Gentile origin in the apostolic times the value of discipline. Finally, it needs to be added that Augustine was aware of the fact that some Christians interpreted the first prohibition as abstaining from idolatry in general. He himself does not seem to be in favour of this understanding; nevertheless, he does not explicitly exclude it, either.

c) It is difficult to assess if the first prohibition forbids idolatry or only food offered to idols. It possibly (sometimes even probably) proscribes both

idolatry in general and consumption of food offered to idols in particular. In this group, we find the writers from the East (Methodius, author(s) / redactor(s) of *DA* and *CA*) as well as the ones associated with both the East and the West (Irenaeus, Jerome, John Cassian).

In spite of these differences, the necessity of shunning all types of idolatry was supported by all the above mentioned authors, even if they did not always agree what in given circumstances counts as an act of idol worship. Similarly, at least majority of these writers acknowledged the necessity of abstaining from food offered to idols, although some of them did not associate this proscription with Acts 15:20.29 nor with Acts 21:25.

## 2. Meaning of abstaining from blood

The interpretations of the ancient authors whose views have been analysed in this thesis with regard to the meaning of abstaining from blood can be classified into three broad groups:

a) Abstaining from blood is a dietary regulation.

This opinion has the greatest number of adherents. All of them, except Ephrem, knew the Eastern version of Acts 15:20 or 15:29. Nevertheless, three among them (Ambrosiaster, Jerome and probably Gaudentius) were also acquainted with the Western version of these verses. It is worth noting that the majority if not all the writers belonging to this group (with the possible exception of Ephrem and the authors / the final redactors of *DA*, documents from the Council of Gangra and *Canons of Pamphilus*) did not seem to treat the prohibition of blood consumption as an independent commandment, but as a practice which must be observed for some other reasons: to shun

idolatry / the table of demons,<sup>447</sup> to restrain temptations which may lead to homicide,<sup>448</sup> to shun gluttony,<sup>449</sup> to teach new converts Christian discipline,<sup>450</sup> to avoid acting like beasts<sup>451</sup> or to avoid defilement<sup>452</sup>. Moreover, at least two authors from this group (Cyril of Alexandria and Socrates) seem to express their conviction of this proscription's temporary validity.

b) Abstaining from blood denotes shunning murder.

Four authors can be considered as representatives of this group: Tertullian, Cyprian (probably), Pacian and Hesychius of Jerusalem who, in contrast to the first three in the list, referred to the Eastern version of Acts 15 in his writings. It must be mentioned that for Tertullian interpretation of abstaining from blood as a dietary prohibition was also valid, but less important than shunning homicide.

c) An early author's understanding of the blood prohibition is not clear.

In a case of some writers, there is a dearth of information with regard to their understanding of the blood prohibition. These are: Irenaeus and Augustine who refer to the Western text of Acts 15:20.29 as well as Epiphanius of Salamis and John Cassian who show their acquaintance with the Eastern version. As it was demonstrated in the previous part of this thesis, Irenaeus must have known the practice of abstaining from blood consumption and most likely endorsed it but it is not clear if he associated it

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<sup>447</sup> Clement of Alexandria, final redactor of *Pseudo-Clementines*, the redactor of *CA*, Origen, Theodoret, probably Jerome.

<sup>448</sup> Clement of Alexandria, probably Methodius, John Chrysostom, Theodoret.

<sup>449</sup> Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, Jerome.

<sup>450</sup> Probably Methodius, Cyril of Alexandria, Jerome.

<sup>451</sup> Cyril of Jerusalem.

<sup>452</sup> Gaudentius.

with Acts 15:20.29. Augustine was familiar with both interpretations of abstaining from blood, but he did not explicitly support or reject any of them.

### 3. Meaning of abstaining from what was strangled

Almost all the writers who were familiar with the Eastern version of Acts 15:20 or 15:29 interpreted this prohibition as a dietary rule, in the same way as they interpreted abstaining from blood. This possibly also includes Epiphanius of Salamis and John Cassian although more data would be needed to have a greater degree of certainty. Thus, the majority of writers treated abstaining from blood and from strangled animals as forbidding in practice to the same type of behaviour. Nevertheless, the homogeneity of these two prohibitions was explicitly articulated only by Ambrosiaster who considered the latter one as redundant, having its origin in a mistake of Greek copyists. Only Hesychius seems to have a different understanding of this prohibition: He interpreted it, namely, in a metaphorical way: as shunning acts of unchastity, acts of pride or being in the power of evil spirits. John Chrysostom's remark that abstaining from what was strangled prohibits murder is more likely to be interpreted in a dietary sense which was in the service of the commandment: "You shall not kill". In other words, Chrysostom seemed to believe that eating strangled animals (and blood) provokes aggression, therefore whoever shuns such consumption will be less prone to harm the others.

### 4. Meaning of abstaining from πορνεία

The majority of ancient writers did not provide us with their direct comments on the meaning of πορνεία in Acts 15:20.29. Thus, in most cases their understanding of this term has been taken from their other writings on

the assumption that they probably interpreted πορνεία taken from Acts 15 in the same way. These interpretations can be divided into three groups:

a) Broader view: Abstaining from fornication denoted shunning any kind of sexual immorality. This view was represented by Tertullian, the final redactor of *Pseudo-Clementines*, Pacian, Jerome and Augustine as well as probably also by Irenaeus and possibly by Theodoret of Cyrus. Clement of Alexandria can also be considered a member of this group, although his understanding of this prohibition was possibly still broader than just shunning sexual immorality: for him, love of money and idolatry can also be labelled as πορνεία so abstaining from πορνεία means shunning these two attitudes as well.

b) Narrower view: Abstaining from fornication denoted shunning sexual relationships with the exception of adultery and / or other types of sexual immorality which were also condemned by non-Christian population. This line of interpretation is shared by Origen, Gaudentius and Ambrosiaster, probably by: the final redactor of *DA*, the final redactor of *CA*, Cyril of Jerusalem, Epiphanius of Salamis and John Cassian and Hesychius, and possibly also by Methodius. Naturally, these authors opposed all types of sexual immorality, however, they were convinced or seemed to be convinced that it was unnecessary for the apostles to forbid something that was already prohibited by the wider society. Consequently, according to them, the command to abstain from fornication did not convey the meaning of abstaining from e.g., adultery because wrongfulness of adultery was clear even to the Gentiles so there was no need to give to new converts any additional instructions in this matter.<sup>453</sup>

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<sup>453</sup> It is worth mentioning, however, that adultery, condemned by both Christians and non-Christian inhabitants of the Roman Empire was understood in a different way by these two groups. For Christians, any extra-marital sexual relations in which a married person is involved is adulterous. According to the Roman law, however, legal concubinage and some casual sexual relations of married men with their slaves or with so called *feminae probosae* (e.g., an actress, a woman caught on committing adultery, a procuress or a prostitute) were

c) Not clearly defined view: Abstaining from fornication means abstaining from sexual immorality with no specification how broadly this should be understood. The following writers can be classified to this group: Cyprian, Ephrem, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria and Socrates.

Needless to say, all the above writers from all three groups opposed sexual immorality in any form whatsoever.

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not considered acts of adultery and were not penalized: Cf. J. Misztal-Konecka, *Incestum w prawie rzymskim* (Lublin 2007) 129-130.

## Chapter II. Normativity of the prohibitions according to the early Christian writers

In this chapter, an attempt is made to establish the view of the ancient authors with regard to the normativity of the injunctions found in Acts 15:20.29 and 25:25. Here, the term “normativity” with regard to the prohibitions, denotes the level of their validity for all the Christians. Considering views about the validity of the prohibitions, it is necessary to distinguish between different time frames due to a possibly different view of a given author about the normativity of the prohibitions in the apostolic times, in his own lifetime and in the future.

As far as the apostolic period is concerned, it must be stated that most probably all analysed authors regarded the prohibitions as normative although this view was not always explicitly expressed. The differences among the writers’ opinions can be found with respect to the normativity of the Jerusalem Council’s prohibitions during the writers’ lifetime and in the future. We will now try, on the basis of the analyses from the previous Part and from the previous Chapter, to summarize the early Christian authors’ views in this matter.

### 1. Normativity of abstaining from offerings to idols

No doubt exists that according to all the aforementioned authors, both those who identified the first prohibition with the prohibition of pagan worship and those who were in favour of a slightly different interpretation, idolatry was perpetually prohibited for a Christian. There were, however, different opinions with respect to the normativity of specific acts which some considered to be connected to or even tantamount to idolatry whereas others held a different view in this matter. It is precisely the view regarding the relationship between eating food offered to idols and idolatry that constitutes the main factor in determining the level of the normativity of the first prohibition interpreted in a

dietary sense. There seems to be a consensus among the ancient writers (probably with the exception of the redactors of the *Pseudo-Clementines*) that in principle all foods are clean for a Christian.<sup>454</sup> They also agree that whenever eating offerings to idols is a wilful act of a polytheistic cult, it cannot, as an act of idolatry, be ever considered acceptable. The writers differ, however, with regard to the acceptability of the consumption of foods offered to idols in particular circumstances.<sup>455</sup>

Now, with regard to the authors' opinion about normativity of the first prohibition in their own lifetime, we can divide the writers into three groups:

a) Eating food offered to idols is still forbidden (at least in principle) for the Christians who were contemporaries of a given author.

This opinion has the highest level of support among the early Christian writers. Among those in favour of it are not only the writers quoting the Eastern version Acts 15: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Methodius (probably), the final redactor of CA, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, John Cassian (probably), Hesychius (probably), redactors of *Pseudo-Clementines*, Epiphanius, Council of Gangra and authors of Canons of Pamphilus, but also authors with a different background: those familiar with the two versions (Gaudentius, Jerome) and many of those who cited the Western version (Irenaeus, Tertullian, Cyprian, Augustine).

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<sup>454</sup> The authors who explicitly state it include: Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus, Ambrosiaster, Gaudentius of Brescia, Jerome, Augustine. Taking into account that this belief was widely spread among ancient Christians and that it was a distinctive factor between the Christians and e.g., Jews or Manichaeans, we can reasonably assume that also other writers whose works have been analysed in this dissertation, condoned the same view.

<sup>455</sup> For example, in Augustine's view, every wilful consumption of food sacrificed to idols had to be rejected as an act of idolatry, but the food of doubtful provenance (which could have been sacrificed to idols, but there was no certainty in this regard) could be lawfully eaten by a Christian. Cyril of Alexandria, on the other hand, considered the prohibition of eating food offered to idols as a proscription of the past which, having fulfilled its role, was not binding in his times.



b) Eating food offered to idols is no longer forbidden for the Christians who were contemporaries of a given author.

It seems there were only three writers who supported this view: Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret of Cyrus (probably) and Socrates of Constantinople (probably). All three of them were familiar with the Eastern variant of the prohibitions and came from the East; nevertheless, each of them represented a different part of the East.

c) A view of an author is not clear

Ephrem, Pacian and the final redactor of *DA* can be counted as belonging to this group. Ambrosiaster, though he probably considered the first prohibition to be against idolatry in general, can also be mentioned here because it is not clear if he opposed eating food offered to idols by his contemporaries in more instances than just as an expression of idolatry or a scandal to another.

With regard to the validity of abstaining from food offered to idols in the future, the following can be stated:

The strictest opinion in this respect is represented by the final redactor of *Pseudo-Clementines* as well as by Cyril of Jerusalem, by Jerome and by Augustine. In *Pseudo-Clementines* eating sacrifices offered to idols equals partaking of the table of demons and is a manifestation of idolatry. Not only was it unacceptable in the times of Apostles and in the times of the formation of *Pseudo-Clementines*, but the final redactor(s) of this literature (who seemed to treat the Mosaic Law literally and did not believe in freedom of foods) probably thought that this type of activity may never be allowed in the future.

Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome, on the other hand, accepted freedom of foods, but in their opinion eating pagan sacrificial offerings constituted an

exception from this liberty. Cyril of Jerusalem, acknowledging in principle the goodness of all kinds of foods, considered food offered to idols as defiled by the invocation of pagan deities over it. In his opinion, a word can change the reality: food is defiled by the idolatric invocation as, in contrast, water becomes blessed by the invocation of the Holy Trinity during the rite of baptism. This anti-sacramental character of eating polytheistic sacrifices as well as obedience to apostolic injunctions, as he understood them, stood behind Cyril's uncompromised attitude towards eating foods offered to idols. Jerome appeared to share the same view: He emphasized that the consumption of pagan offerings was unacceptable and that it was an exception from the freedom of foods. He probably treated the wilful consumption of food offered to idols as a necessary manifestation of idolatry. Nevertheless, Cyril of Jerusalem and Jerome did not express explicitly what their attitude was with regard to indiscriminate consumption of meat bought in the market. It is most probable that following Paul's explanations from 1 Cor 10:25-30, they condoned this practice (unless they interpreted Paul's words in some other way).

Augustine's view with regard to eating food offered to idols is similar to Cyril's and Jerome's opinions, but more precisely formulated than theirs. According to Augustine, if someone consumes such food knowing with certainty that it was offered to pagan deities, he commits an act of idolatry. Nevertheless, if someone eats such food without knowing what it was used for or if he has doubts about it, he does not commit any sinful act. Thus, it appears that for these just mentioned ancient authors a wilful consumption of sacrifices to idols always equals idolatry and, therefore, is permanently forbidden. This view was probably also shared by Irenaeus and Cyprian.

Nevertheless, more ancient authors seemed to be at least open to the possibility that the prohibition of eating food offered to idols may have a temporary value. They appear to think that such consumption may be admitted in the future, provided that it is not wilfully idolatrous and there are no other obstacles, for example scandalizing others. In other words, in their

opinion eating food offered to idols with full awareness of its provenance does not automatically equals idolatry. Naturally, we are here mostly within the realm of probability as in a number of cases it is not easy to establish a given opinion with a hundred-percent certainty. Cyril of Alexandria is one of the most outspoken representatives of this group. In his view, exceptions from freedom of foods were created in apostolic times for an educational purpose: to teach Christian discipline to the new converts of Gentile origin. These injunctions, however, were temporary and need not be kept if there is no reason that would justify their observance. This view was probably shared by Socrates of Constantinople as well.

The other famous Alexandrians, Clement and Origen, while supporting abstaining from eating food offered to idols for their contemporaries, give us reasons to think that they could imagine allowing such a consumption if there were no dangers evoked by it. Clement, although he calls the dietary prohibition of the Apostolic Council an exception from the freedom of foods, he states, nevertheless, that the use of food is, in principle, morally indifferent (ἀδιάφορος). Moreover, he appears to juxtapose this kind of renunciation with another kind of renunciation of licit practices for the greater good (cf. 1 Cor 9:4-5), suggesting by this that the apostolic injunction of abstaining from food sacrificed to idols is of the similar nature: something in principle licit needs to be abstained from for the greater good.<sup>456</sup>

As to Origen, he clarifies that he supports abstaining from food offered to idols not because this food is contaminated, but because of evil consequences that this sort of consumption would produce in his times.<sup>457</sup> Nevertheless, it is possible to infer from Origen's way of reasoning that he would not have objected to eating pagan offerings if all evil effects could be eliminated.

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<sup>456</sup> Cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 4.15.97.4 (GCS 52,291; SC 463,218). Translation: W. Wilson, ANF 2,427.

<sup>457</sup> Cf. Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.30 (SuppVC 54,545).

Not only Alexandrian authors alone appear to treat the first prohibition as a temporary injunction, but also the representatives of Antiochian school: John Chrysostom and probably Theodoret of Cyrus. John Chrysostom's answer in response to the question why the prohibitions have been introduced by the Apostolic Council resembles Cyril's of Alexandria reply: They were introduced for the educational purpose which for Chrysostom consisted of teaching new converts of Gentile origin respect for the Mosaic Law and its followers. John Chrysostom is certain that dietary injunctions do not come from the teaching of Jesus, but from the Old Law. Thus, although he condones abstaining from eating idol sacrifices, he, nevertheless, regards even this type of food as clean in itself. Therefore, his way of reasoning allows us to think that John Chrysostom would not condemn eating pagan sacrificial food if this action generated no evil effects. A similar conclusion also applies to Theodoret (and possibly to Methodius) for whom all dietary regulations belonged to the precepts "not taught by nature" and, accordingly, had only temporary validity. Ambrosiaster who probably understands the first prohibition as proscription of idolatry seems, nevertheless, to be sharing the opinion about the temporary binding character of shunning food offered to idols. If no danger existed that a certain Christian would be encouraged to act against his conscience or a certain non-Christian would regard Christians as polytheists or hypocrites, Ambrosiaster would probably not oppose eating food offered to idols.

As to the remaining ancient authors from the ones analysed in this dissertation, there is not enough data to classify them with probability as members of any of the above mentioned groups.<sup>458</sup>

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<sup>458</sup> These are: author / redactor of *DA*, final redactor of *CA*, Council of Gangra, *Canons of Pamphilus*, Epiphanius, John Cassian, Hesychius of Jerusalem, Pacian of Barcelona, Ephrem, Tertullian and Gaudentius of Brescia.

## 2. Normativity of abstaining from blood

Authors who interpreted this injunction as the prohibition of murder, obviously held it as a permanently binding rule, both in their own lifetime and in the future.<sup>459</sup> Other writers, however, who understood abstaining from blood in a dietary sense, presented different views with respect to the normativity of this proscription. First, let us summarize their attitude to the validity of the blood consumption prohibition for their Christian contemporaries. The following groups can be distinguished:

a) Writers who supported the validity of the blood consumption prohibition in times they lived.

It is not surprising that many writers who can be counted as members of this group came from the East: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Methodius (probably), the final redactor of *CA*, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Chrysostom, John Cassian (probably), the final redactor(s) of Pseudo-Clementines, Council of Gangra and the author(s) of the Canons of Pamphilus. Still, quite a number of the authors from the West can be ascribed to this group as well: First, chronologically, is Irenaeus. It must be said that although his understanding of the meaning of the second prohibition from Acts 15:29 is not clear for us, nonetheless, he knew and most probably supported the practice of abstaining from blood in his times. Similarly, Tertullian: even though blood consumption proscription appears to be of secondary importance for him, nevertheless, he condoned it with regard to his contemporaries. Two other Western writers, Gaudentius of Brescia and Jerome, also supported this practice. Finally, Hesychius of Jerusalem probably supported the proscription of blood consumption, although he did not understand the prohibition of blood as having primarily dietary character.

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<sup>459</sup> Tertullian, Cyprian (probably), Pacian of Barcelona and Hesychius of Jerusalem.

b) Writers who considered the blood consumption prohibition as already obsolete in their times.

Augustine was an author who expressed this view in the clearest way. Augustine who shows evidence of his acquaintance with the Western type of this biblical text was, nevertheless, familiar with both main interpretations of the blood prohibition. Still, he seemed not to be interested in investigating which of these interpretations was the correct one. It is the normativity of this injunction that appears to interest him most. In his view, this ruling did not have any practical significance for him and his contemporaries, regardless of the way it was understood. If its original goal had been to proscribe murder, such a ruling would be redundant in Augustine's times as all Christians were aware of the validity of the commandment "You shall not kill". If, on the other hand, abstaining from blood had had a dietary meaning in apostolic times, its validity did not extend to the period of Augustine's life because the reason for this proscription's enforcement ceased to exist. As we have read in the previous part of this work, Augustine testifies that in the times and place he lived, the practices of abstaining from blood consumption and from eating what was strangled were not observed by Christians. His explanation, therefore, did not have a character of a theoretical speculation, but was an elucidation and support of a discipline his Christian contemporaries and compatriots from Proconsular Africa practiced.

Cyril of Alexandria is another author who also treats blood consumption prohibition as a ruling of the past: It was valid in apostolic times, in his times, however, it was already obsolete. The conviction that the blood consumption prohibition was not binding in his times any more was also most probably shared by Socrates of Constantinople as can be inferred from his writings analysed in the previous part of this work.

It is noteworthy that three most explicit advocates of a temporary value of this injunction, Augustine, Cyril of Alexandria and Socrates do not belong to the same group with regard to the familiarity with the textual tradition of

Acts 15. Another difference between them is their provenance from different parts of the Mediterranean world. What unites them, however, is the fact that all these three authors were contemporaries and lived in the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century and the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

c) Writers whose views on the normativity of abstaining from eating blood in their times are not clear.

The authors belonging to this group include three writers who referred to the Eastern text of Acts: the final redactor of *DA*, Theodoret and Epiphanius as well as four writers who exclusively referred to (or preferred) the Western text of Acts: Cyprian, Pacian, Ephrem and Ambrosiaster. With regard to the latter sub-group, Cyprian and Pacian interpreted abstaining from blood as a prohibition of homicide, and it is not clear if they knew and were in favour of shunning the consumption of blood. Ambrosiaster, on the other hand, clearly understood the second prohibition from Acts 15:29 in a dietary sense, but his comments on it do not contain sufficient information to allow us to draw conclusion with regard to his position on the normativity of this proscription.

Now, we shall summarize the views of the early Christian authors with regard to the validity of blood consumption prohibition in the future. In other words, on the basis of the analyses from Part II of this dissertation, it will be discussed how many writers held this proscription as permanently binding and how many treated it as a temporary ruling.

a) Authors who interpreted abstaining from blood consumption as permanently binding

Most probably the final redactors of the *Pseudo-Clementine* literature treat blood consumption prohibition as a permanently binding proscription.

This is most likely a result of judaizing tendencies of the writers responsible for the final form of both *Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*.

b) Authors who interpreted abstaining from blood consumption as a requirement of temporary validity

Augustine, as well as most probably Cyril of Alexandria and Socrates of Constantinople, did not hold the proscription of blood consumption to be valid even in their own times so they obviously belong to the group of writers who deny the binding power of this prohibition also in the future. Moreover, it appears that more writers can be qualified as potential supporters of the temporal validity of blood consumption prohibition. Certainly, we face a difficulty that a majority of the ancient authors who have been analysed in this thesis do not comment explicitly on the level of the prohibitions' normativity. For this reason, it is not an easy task to extract from their texts valuable information which could shed some light on this question. Such a task requires "reading between the lines" and, therefore, has inevitably a rather speculative character. In spite of this difficulty, however, there are good reasons to surmise that a number of authors at least possibly (Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Gaudentius of Brescia, John Chrysostom) and in some cases even probably (Methodius of Olympus, Theodoret of Cyrus, Hesychius of Jerusalem) understood the blood consumption prohibition as an injunction whose normativity may be changed in the future. The arguments which support this conclusion are as follows:

Methodius treated literal fulfilment of dietary laws as belonging to the Old Testament. According to him, these laws have allegorical and spiritual significance for Christians, and need not be fulfilled literally. Thus, it is likely that even if he recognized the Apostolic Council's blood consumption prohibition as an exception from the freedom of foods, he treated it as necessary only for his times due to some particular circumstances and possible to change in the future.



With regard to Theodoret of Cyrus, his opinion about permanently binding precepts taught by nature and precepts not taught by nature which are of temporary validity, allows us to suspect that the latter ones, encompassing Mosaic dietary laws, apply to the Apostolic Council's dietary proscriptions as well, if not in his times yet, then in the times to come. In the case of Hesychius, his emphasis on the allegorical interpretation of dietary prohibitions also gives us a reason to think that, according to him, the literal observance of blood consumption will not be required in the future.

As to the other authors just mentioned, the claim that they held the blood consumption prohibition as possible to change in the future becomes more speculative. For Tertullian, this proscription was of secondary character already in his times and one can imagine that, in his view, its significance would have a decreasing tendency in the future. Both Clement and his disciple, Origen were under the influence of the ancient belief that the odour of blood attracts demons, but at the same time, both held the matters of food consumption as morally indifferent (ἀδιάφορος) in principle. Therefore, we can surmise that once they had learned about the falsity of the existence of any connection between eating blood and demons and once no other obstacles (like scandal) were present, they would not have objected to the blood consumption. Similar conclusions may also be reached with regard to John Chrysostom. In Chrysostom's view, the purpose of abstaining from eating blood was to safeguard human beings from committing murder. It appears, nevertheless, that Chrysostom's opinion with regard to blood consumption would have been positive if he had been sure that it has nothing to do with stimulating aggression and it does not result in any other morally unacceptable outcome.

d) Authors whose views with regard to the normativity of abstaining from blood consumption in the future are not sufficiently clear.

The views of the remaining writers<sup>460</sup> with regard to the validity of the blood consumption prohibition in the future cannot be established either with certainty or probability or even strong possibility. Having stated this, however, it would seem that a substantial number among them could potentially have been in favour of the temporal validity of this proscription. This conclusion is based on the fact, which has already been mentioned in the previous chapter, that the majority of this group of writers did not treat this injunction as an independent commandment, but emphasized its connections with unacceptable behaviour such as idolatry, murder or gluttony. Moreover, they stated or at least gave an impression that eating blood is forbidden precisely because of these links with evil practices. Accordingly, if at one point such a link ceased to exist, a number of writers from this group would possibly regard the blood consumption prohibition as obsolete.

### 3. Normativity of abstaining from what was strangled.

There is no evidence that the majority of the authors who were familiar with the Eastern version of Acts 15:20.29 treated the normativity of this prohibition differently from the normativity of abstaining from blood. Only Hesychius of Jerusalem who seemed to understand this proscription in a metaphorical way as a necessity to shun acts of unchastity, of pride and of being in power of evil spirits (and this interpretation was a little different from his understanding of abstaining from blood, considered these metaphorical injunctions as permanently binding which cannot be said, however, as regards literal and dietary observance of this rule.

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<sup>460</sup> Irenaeus, Pacian, Cyprian, Ephrem, final redactor of *DA*, final redactor of *CA*, Cyril of Jerusalem, John Cassian, Ambrosiaster, Jerome, Epiphanius, Council of Gangra, authors of *Canons of Pamphilus*.

#### 4. Normativity of abstaining from πορνεία

We need not enter into interpretative details to notice that the ancient Christian writers unanimously condemned everything that was labelled as πορνεία / *fornicatio*. For example, Irenaeus found sexual immorality to be one of the sins which exclude from the Kingdom of God, basing his conclusion on the words of Paul the Apostle from Gal 5:21: *Those who do these things, will not inherit the Kingdom of God*.<sup>461</sup> For Tertullian, a commandment to shun sexual immorality was a part of the immutable law of the New Testament.<sup>462</sup> In Pacian's view, *fornicatio* was one of the capital sins which "cut off the soul".<sup>463</sup> According to Clement of Alexandria, "he who commits fornication is wholly dead to God, and is abandoned by the Word as a dead body by the spirit".<sup>464</sup> For Origen, πορνεία always defiles a human being.<sup>465</sup> According to the redactor of CA and Theodoret of Cyrus, shunning sexual immorality forms a part of the natural law which is immutable. Socrates of Constantinople explicitly underlines that fornication is not an indifferent matter.<sup>466</sup> In Gaudentius' opinion, liberty of food (taking into account the exceptions introduced by the Apostolic Council) was introduced to allow Christians to save their forces to shun sexual immorality.<sup>467</sup> And Augustine held *fornicatio* to be one of the mortal sins.<sup>468</sup>

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<sup>461</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* I.26.3 (SC 264.348).

<sup>462</sup> Tertullian, *Pud.* 12,10 (SC 394,206).

<sup>463</sup> Pacian, *Sermo de paenitentibus* 4,2 (SC 410,124). Translation: C.L. Hanson, FC.NT 99,74-75.

<sup>464</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 2.10.100.1 (GCS 12,217). Transl. W. Wilson, ANF 2,263.

<sup>465</sup> Origen, *Com. Matt* 11.15; Origen, *Contra Celsum* 8.29.

<sup>466</sup> Socrates, *HE* 5:22.70-71 (GCS.NF 1,304; SC 505,236).

<sup>467</sup> Gaudentius of Brescia, *Sermo XV. De diversis capitulis quintus: Die natali Machabaeorum* (PL 20,954).

<sup>468</sup> Augustine, *Speculum* 29 (CSEL 34,199-200).

The seriousness these authors present in their comments on πορνεία / *fornicatio* allow us to surmise that they regarded abstaining from this type of behaviour as permanently binding. This conclusion can also be extended to all the Christian writers whose works have been analysed in the previous part of this thesis. In Christian antiquity, anything labelled as πορνεία certainly was held as seriously wrong. This applies not only to different kinds of sexual immorality, but also to the types of behaviour which were named πορνεία metaphorically, as, for instance, love of money and idolatry.<sup>469</sup>

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<sup>469</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Strom.* 7.12.75.3 (GCS 17,54). Translation: W. Wilson, ANF 2,544.

### Chapter III. Influence of the textual tradition of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 on ancient authors' understanding of the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions

In this last chapter, the study will establish whether the text variants of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 considered by the early Christian writers to be original influenced their understanding of the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions. Before this is undertaken, however, it will be helpful to mention what follows: A number of scholars think that each of the two versions of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 already contained a clear indication how the prohibitions should be interpreted: as dietary laws or moral commandments. For example, Adolf von Harnack wrote:

...der Text, wie er in W lautet, wirklich ein elementaler Moralkatechismus ist und sein will; der O-Text aber ist offenbar etwas ganz anderes. Er hat es nicht mit der elementaren Moral zu thun, sondern giebt unter besonderen geschichtlichen Umständen einige ganz bestimmte Anweisungen für die christliche Lebensführung.<sup>470</sup>

Bruce Metzger has a similar view. He states:

...it is obvious that the threefold prohibition (lacking τοῦ πνικτοῦ) refers to moral injunctions to refrain from idolatry, unchastity, and blood-shedding (or murder), to which is added the negative Golden Rule. (...) It (...) appears to be more likely that an original ritual prohibition against eating foods offered to idols, things strangled and blood, and against πορνεία (however this latter is to be interpreted) was altered into a moral law by dropping the reference to πνικτοῦ and by adding the negative Golden Rule, than to suppose that an original moral law was transformed into a food law.<sup>471</sup>

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<sup>470</sup> A. Harnack, „Das Aposteldecret (Act. 15,29) und die Blass'sche Hypothese“, *Sitzungsberichte der Preußischen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* 11 (1899) 158 [150-176]. Translation: „... the text, as we have it in the Western version, is, in fact, and wants to be an elementary moral catechism; the Eastern text, however, is clearly something quite different: It does not deal with the basic ethics, but under particular historical circumstances it gives very specific instructions for the Christian way of life“ (translation mine).

<sup>471</sup> B.M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on The Greek New Testament* (Stuttgart<sup>2</sup> 2002) 381, *BibleWorks*, v.8.

Finally, Christopher Tuckett summarizes the views of the majority of contemporary scholars in this matter in the following way:

There is widespread agreement that (a) the 'Western' reading is secondary, and that (b) it has the effect of changing a cultic / ritual (or partly cultic / ritual) rule into an exclusively moral one.<sup>472</sup>

Taking these statements into account, it would seem that the ancient authors who knew only the Western version of Acts 15:20.29 should interpret the prohibitions as Decalogian<sup>473</sup> rulings whereas the writers who knew the Eastern version of these verses, should understand first three prohibitions from Acts 15:29 as dietary laws. Furthermore, it would also appear that the Western writers, for whom the prohibitions in question were not dietary, did not have a reason to hold dietary rulings as normative, contrary to what the Eastern writers would be expected to do (the only exception here would be eating food offered to idols which not only the Eastern but also the Western writers can be expected to hold as binding as a form of idolatry).

Thus, on the basis of the above considerations, it is assumed what follows:

A) It is assumed that the textual variant quoted by an ancient author is held to be original (even if there is no explanation of author's views in this regard in the commentary to the variant or there is no commentary at all). The reasonability of this assumption lies in the fact that the given author would not quote a version of the Scripture he did not consider original without providing any explanation.

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<sup>472</sup> C. Tuckett, "How Early Is the 'Western' Text of Acts?", T. Nicklas – M. Tilly (eds.) *The Book of Acts as Church History. Text, Textual Traditions and Ancient Interpretations / Apostegeschichte als Kirchengeschichte. Text, Texttraditionen und antike Auslegungen* (BZNW 120; Berlin – New York 2003) 84.

<sup>473</sup> The neologism "Decalogian" has been chosen to emphasize the strong association of these types of rulings with morality expressed in the Decalogue, in opposition to the Pentateuchal dietary laws which *per se* are not derived from the Decalogue. More on the different types of laws in ancient Judaism (moral, ritual and dietary which constituted a special case) see: J. Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford 2000).

B) We assume the existence of the connection of the Western variant with a Decalogian interpretation of the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions. Consequently, if a writer preferred the Western variant (or chose it because he did not know any other variant reading) and understood the first prohibition as abstaining from idolatry and the prohibition of blood as shunning murder (both in accordance with the respective commandments of the Decalogue), then his interpretation will be deemed to have been deeply influenced by his use of the Western variant. If, on the other hand, such an author perceived these prohibitions in a different way, then his interpretation will be regarded as probably influenced by some other factors.

C) We assume the existence of the connection of the Eastern variant with a dietary interpretation of the meaning and normativity of the prohibitions (except abstaining from *πορνεία*). Consequently, if a writer preferred the Eastern variant (or chose it because he did not know any other variant reading) and understood the first prohibition as well as abstaining from blood and abstaining from what was strangled in a dietary sense and considered them as normative, then his interpretation will be deemed to have been deeply influenced by his use of the Eastern variant. If, on the other hand, such an author perceived these prohibitions as non-dietary laws and / or as not normative in his times, then his interpretation will be regarded as probably influenced by some other factors.

On the basis of these assumptions and the summaries from the previous chapters, we can present relationship between the textual variant of the prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29; 21:25 and early Christian writers' perception of their meaning

and normativity in the chart below.<sup>474</sup>

Explanations: For the sake of a better visibility, the chart is presented in a horizontal (landscape) layout. Bold print in the chart signifies the accordance of a given view with the view expected from any Western or Eastern author; red colour signifies lack of accordance with the expected view and italics denote lack of sufficient data to establish the relationship of a given view with the expected one.

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<sup>474</sup> Meaning and normativity of abstaining from πορνεία has been omitted from the chart because there seems to be no difference in their interpretation in relation to, generally speaking, Eastern or Western variant of the prohibitions. The normativity of the first prohibition understood as abstaining from idolatry the normativity of abstaining from blood understood as shunning murder have been omitted from the chart for the same reason.



Author	Text	Meaning of the first prohibition	Meaning of abstaining from blood / strangled animals	Normativity of abstaining from food offered to idols (in a given author's times)	Normativity of abstaining from eating blood / strangled animals (in a given author's times)	Normativity of abstaining from food offered to idols (in the future)	Normativity of abstaining from eating blood / strangled animals (in the future)	Total <sup>475</sup>
Irenaeus	Western	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Binding</i>	<u>Binding</u>	<i>Probably binding</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>0:5:1</b>
Tertullian	Western	<b>No idolatry (and no consumption of food offered to idols which in a number of cases if not always is considered a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<b>No murder (and secondarily, no consumption of blood)</b>	<i>Binding</i>	<u>Binding</u>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>Possibly not binding</b>	<b>3:2:1</b>
Cyprian	Western	<b>Probably no idolatry (and</b>	<b>Probably no murder</b>	<i>Binding</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Probably</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>2:4:0</b>

<sup>475</sup> Total of expected views (in bold print), not clear views (italics) and not expected views (underlined).

		no consumption of food offered to idols which in a number of cases if not always is considered a manifestation of idolatry)				<i>binding</i>		
Pacian	Western	<b>No idolatry</b>	<b>No murder</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>2:4:0</b>
Ephrem	Western	<u>Probably no consumption of food offered to idols</u>	<u>No consumption of blood</u>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>0:4:2</b>
Augustine	Western	<u>No consumption of food offered to idols (because it is a manifestation of idolatry)</u>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Binding</i>	<b>Not binding</b>	<i>Binding</i>	<b>Not binding</b>	<b>2:3:1</b>
Ambrosiaster	Both Eastern and Western variants known, but the Western one is held to be original	<b>Probably no idolatry (and no consumption of food offered to idols which is in a number of cases if not always considered a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<u>No consumption of blood</u>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Probably not binding</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>1:4:1</b>
Gaudentius	Both Eastern	<i>No consumption of food</i>	<i>No consumption of blood and</i>	<i>Binding</i>	<i>Binding</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Possibly</i>	<b>0:6:0</b>

	and Western variants known	<i>offered to idols (because it is a manifestation of idolatry)</i>	<i>strangled animals (because it is held to be a defilement)</i>				<i>not binding</i>	
Jerome	Both Eastern and Western variants known, but the Eastern one is probably held to be original	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because or when it is a manifestation of idolatry and gluttony as well as because it is a way to teach new converts Christian discipline)</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>4:2:0</b>
Clement	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (when it is a manifestation of idolatry and because of a potential scandal)</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because it provokes aggression and is a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<u>Possibly not binding</u>	<u>Possibly not binding</u>	<b>4:0:2</b>
Origen	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (when it is</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<u>Possibly not</u>	<u>Possibly not</u>	<b>4:0:2</b>

		<b>a manifestation of idolatry and gluttony)</b>	<b>(because or when it is a manifestation of idolatry and gluttony)</b>			<u>binding</u>	<u>binding</u>	
Methodius	Eastern	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because of the important metaphorical meaning they have and because it is a way to teach discipline to the new Christian converts)</b>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<u>Possibly not binding</u>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<b>3:1:2</b>
<i>Pseudo-Clementines</i>	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (because it is a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because it is a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Most probably binding</b>	<b>6:0:0</b>
<i>DA</i>	Eastern	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>1:5:0</b>
<i>CA</i>	Eastern	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (when</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<b>Binding</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>3:3:0</b>

			it is a manifestation of idolatry)					
Gangra	Eastern	No consumption of food offered to idols	No consumption of blood and strangled animals	Binding	Binding	Not clear	Not clear	4:2:0
Pamphilus	Eastern	Not clear	No consumption of blood and strangled animals	Binding	Binding	Not clear	Not clear	3:3:0
Epiphanius	Eastern	No consumption of food offered to idols (when it is a manifestation of idolatry)	Not clear	Binding	Not clear	Not clear	Not clear	2:4:0
Cyril of Jerusalem	Eastern	No consumption of food offered to idols (out of obedience to the apostolic authority and because it is a manifestation of idolatry and gluttony)	No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because it is a manifestation of gluttony and behaviour similar to the behaviour of beasts)	Binding	Binding	Binding	Not clear	5:1:0
John Chrysostom	Eastern	No consumption of food offered to idols (out of obedience to the apostolic	No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because it provokes aggression and out	Binding	Binding	Possibly not	Possibly not	4:0:2

		<b>authority and when it is a manifestation of idolatry or a reason of scandal or because of other reasons)</b>	of obedience to the apostolic authority) <sup>476</sup>			<u>binding</u>	<u>binding</u>	
John Cassian	Eastern	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<i>Not clear</i>	<b>2:4:0</b>
Hesychius	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (because of the important metaphorical meaning it has)</b>	<u>No murder (and secondarily, no consumption of blood)</u> <sup>477</sup>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<b>Probably binding</b>	<i>Not clear</i>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<b>3:1:2</b>
Cyril of Alexandria	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (because it is a way to teach new</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because it is a way to teach</b>	<u>Not binding</u>	<u>Not binding</u>	<u>Not binding</u>	<u>Not binding</u>	<b>2:0:4</b>

<sup>476</sup> John Chrysostom's remark that abstaining from what was strangled prohibits murder is more likely to be interpreted in a dietary sense which was in the service of the commandment: "You shall not kill". In other words, Chrysostom seemed to believe that eating strangled animals (and blood) provokes aggression, therefore whoever shuns such consumption will be less prone to harm the others.

<sup>477</sup> In case of Hesychius, there is a difference between his understanding of the meaning of abstaining from blood and abstaining from strangled animals. The latter prohibition was interpreted by him in a metaphorical way: as shunning acts of unchastity, acts of pride or being in the power of evil spirits.

		<b>converts Christian discipline)</b>	<b>new converts Christian discipline)</b>					
Theodoret	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols (when it creates scandal and is a manifestation of gluttony)</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals (because or when it provokes aggression and is a manifestation of idolatry)</b>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<i>Not clear</i>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<u>2:1:3</u>
Socrates	Eastern	<b>No consumption of food offered to idols</b>	<b>No consumption of blood and strangled animals</b>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<u>Most probably not binding</u>	<u>Probably not binding</u>	<u>Not binding</u>	<u>2:0:4</u>
Total (for each column)	-	W: <u>4:1:1</u> E: <u>11:6:0</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	W: <u>3:2:1</u> E: <u>14:2:1</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	W: <u>0:2:4</u> E: <u>13:1:3</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	W: <u>1:3:2</u> E: <u>12:3:2</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	W: <u>1:2:3</u> E: <u>3:7:7</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	W: <u>2:4:0</u> E: <u>0:9:8</u> W&E: <u>0:1:0</u>	-

The data presented above show us what follows:

A) The assumption that the writers who preferred the Eastern variant understood the prohibitions as dietary laws (except abstaining from πορνεία) generally proved true for the majority of them. As far as the Western writers are concerned, the situation looks more complex: three writers out of seven understood the proscriptions as Decalogian, two understood some of the proscriptions as dietary, one (Ambrosiaster) understood the first prohibition as both Decalogian and dietary, and abstaining from blood as dietary whereas the position of Irenaeus is not clear.

Nevertheless, on a deeper level, the interpretations of both groups are closer to each other it might appear on the surface. A significant number of Eastern authors understood the dietary laws which they saw in the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions as ways to prevent behaviour which would violate more important ethical values, such as monotheism or respect for human life. Consequently, their interpretations were in fact similar to the Decalogian interpretations preferred by Western writers. On the other hand, also a substantial number of Western authors were aware of the existence of the dietary laws like prohibition of eating food offered to idols or prohibition of eating blood and what was strangled. Although they did not necessarily associate these dietary laws with Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25, they considered them binding in the times of the Apostles, if not even in their own times.

B) The assumption that the majority of the Eastern writers supported the normativity of the three dietary prohibitions in their lifetime proved true. With regard to the Western writers, the conclusions are not so unequivocal: two out of seven supported the prohibition of eating blood and strangled animals for their contemporaries, one was against, but the four others did not present a clear position in this matter. Moreover, the clear majority of the Western authors were in favour of the validity of abstaining from consumption of sacrifices during their lifetime.



C) As regards the Western and Eastern writers' approach to the question whether the dietary prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29 may at some point in the future stop being regarded as binding, the conclusions, although inevitably more speculative, can still be considered as belonging to the realm of probability or at least plausible possibility. As far as the Western writers are concerned, a half of the group seemed to consider abstaining from food offered to idols as permanently binding, most probably on the grounds that such consumption was regarded by them as inherently connected with idolatry. With respect to blood consumption prohibition, the majority of Western authors do not express clearly their view, while two Western writers hold it as non binding. The greater number of Eastern authors did not reveal their opinion about the validity of the dietary prohibitions in the future, but still a substantial number of them seemed to be in favour of the view that these proscriptions, if not non-binding already, may be regarded as non-binding at some point in the future.<sup>478</sup>

D) Finally, summarizing the overall influence the textual variants of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 had on the attitude of the early Christian writers to the prohibitions, it appears that in majority of cases the preference of Eastern or Western textual variant had at least a partial influence on their formal understanding of the meaning of the prohibitions, with the Western writers' tendency to the Decalogian interpretation and Eastern writers' tendency to the dietary interpretation of the prohibitions in question. This influence, however, was minor or non-existent with regard to the deeper level of understanding of the proscriptions from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 which was mentioned above. As to the normativity of the prohibitions, the influence of the textual preferences of the Eastern and Western authors is harder to track.

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<sup>478</sup> Among the Eastern authors who were at least implicitly open to the possibility of a non-binding character of the Apostolic Council's dietary prohibitions in the future, the following ones can be enumerated: a) With regard to food offered to idols: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Methodius, John Chrysostom, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Socrates of Constantinople. b) With regard to blood and strangled animals: Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Methodius, John Chrysostom, Hesychius, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Socrates.

It seems that the Eastern variant exerted substantial influence on the majority of the Eastern writers with regard to the normativity of the prohibitions during their lifetime, but the same cannot be said about their stand on the validity of the prohibitions in the future: here this influence appears to be rather small. The Western variant, on the other hand, cannot be considered influential to the same extent with regard to the Western authors' views on the validity of the prohibitions for their contemporaries: If it did not exist, these writers would nonetheless have observed their ethical rulings as the basic commandments from Decalogue. Moreover, a considerable number of these writers supported the validity for their lifetime of at least one dietary laws out of those which the Eastern authors saw in Acts 15:20.29 and / or 21:25. Still, regardless of differences between various early interpretations of meaning and normativity of the prohibitions, there seems to be a common denominator for the majority if not for all of the early authors analysed in Part II of this dissertation: the recognition of the validity of the Decalogian rulings and the treatment of dietary laws as ancillary to these Decalogian rulings.<sup>479</sup> On the other hand, the main difference between the early interpretations appears to lie in practical conclusions derived from such a treatment of dietary laws: for a number of writers these laws although of ancillary character were strictly connected with the commandments of the Decalogue and, therefore, it was necessary to observe them as long as such a connection existed, for others simple and limited dietary laws were given to the new converts from the Gentiles for educational purposes (to teach them Christian values), but at some point in history these dietary rules would become obsolete and would cease to be observed (in some authors' views, such a situation already happened before or during their own lifetimes).

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<sup>479</sup> E.g., for Clement of Alexandria and Origen abstaining from eating blood was necessary because of a close association of blood consumption with idolatry / table of demons, not because such consumption is intrinsically evil per se. Thus, the precept of abstaining from eating blood is ancillary to the Decalogian commandment which forbids idolatry.



## Conclusion

This thesis has presented various views of early Christian writers about the prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25. Furthermore, it has shown how these views were related to the textual variants the ancient authors used. For this purpose, in Part I the relevant biblical texts in their textual variants have been shown and shortly commented on. Next, in Part II, ancient texts quoting or referring to Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 have been presented and analysed with the purpose of establishing the authors' interpretations of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions from these verses. This has been achieved in the following manner: Chapter I of Part II was dedicated to analysing the texts of five writers who clearly referred to the Western version of the above mentioned verses, whereas in Chapter II literary fragments referring to the Eastern variants have been examined and Chapter III contains analyses of the texts written by three authors who certainly or probably were familiar with both the Eastern and the Western variants of the prohibitions. Finally, in Part III, the synthesis of the analyses from Part II has been proposed: Various interpretations of the meaning and normativity of the Apostolic Council's prohibitions have been juxtaposed and summarized and an attempt has been made to answer the central question of this thesis about the relationship of different interpretations of the prohibitions and the textual variants used by particular authors.

In general, it can be said that in majority of cases the textual variants the early writers knew and considered to be original influenced their interpretation of the meaning of the prohibitions in some part. Nevertheless, as the last chapter of Part III shows, the principle common to the majority if not all early Christian authors mentioned in this work, namely the priority and validity of moral laws embedded in the Decalogue and the ancillary character of the dietary laws strongly suggests that it was not ancient writers' knowledge of particular textual tradition that was crucial for their interpretation of these texts: other factors like possible oral tradition or

scriptural context were at least equally if not more important. The analysis of these factors is beyond the scope of the present dissertation and remains one of the open research questions for the future. With regard to the normativity of the prohibitions, the presence of *πνικτόν* among them appears to be substantially influential for the position of many Eastern authors who maintained that the dietary proscriptions from Acts 15:20.29 were still binding in their lifetimes. However, this influence seems to fade when it comes to the Eastern authors' opinion about the binding force of abstaining from blood and from what was strangled in the future: A substantial number of them did not have a clear opinion on this matter and some of them even appeared to be in favour of a view that these two prohibitions may cease to be binding at some point in the future. As to the Western authors, the textual variant of Acts 15:20.29 they knew (without *πνικτόν*) was, in general, not very influential on their view of the normativity of the prohibitions: Those who interpreted them as shunning idolatry, murder and fornication, would shun these acts altogether anyway on the basis of the teaching of the Decalogue. Moreover, a number of these writers appeared to know and support the specific dietary prohibitions in some way, even though the Western text encourages rather a Decalogian understanding of the proscriptions.

A special case exists with regard to Jerome and Ambrosiaster who knew both Eastern and Western version of the prohibitions from Acts 15. Juxtaposing their views, we discover that the crucial difference between them lies in their attitude to the original form of these biblical verses: According to Ambrosiaster, the version without *πνικτόν* was original, Jerome, however, probably preferred the reading which contained this term.<sup>480</sup> Nevertheless, in spite of this difference, both authors' interpretations of the meaning of Jerusalem Council's prohibitions are relatively similar. For instance, both writers regarded abstaining from blood and from strangled animals as dietary

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<sup>480</sup> Gaudentius probably knew both versions as well, but it is not clear what his opinion about their authenticity was.

prohibitions. Also, both authors probably shared the view that the prohibitions from Acts 15:20.29 should be interpreted as forbidding some actions which were allowed by the Roman law, not the actions which were already proscribed by this law on the grounds that prohibiting the latter would have been redundant. Still, between Jerome and Ambrosiaster there were differences with regard to the validity of the prohibitions. For Jerome, abstaining from food offered to idols was always binding and abstaining from blood and strangled animals was binding at least in his time (it is far from certain, however, if he considered it as permanently binding). In contrast, Ambrosiaster's views on the normativity of the dietary prohibitions are, in general, not clear. The only thing we can infer from his writings is that at some point in the future eating food offered to idols may probably not be regarded as idolatrous and, consequently, would not be forbidden. The above examples of Jerome and Ambrosiaster seem to indicate that an author's conviction about the original form of a certain reading of Acts 15:20.29 does not necessarily have to influence this author's interpretation in a substantial way.

It needs to be mentioned that the findings of this thesis contribute not only to the history of early interpretation, but also to the contemporary New Testament scholarship.

The findings of the thesis may also be helpful in shedding some light on the original meaning of the prohibitions. Different ancient writers made several observations in which they pointed out the following:

A) Gentiles were aware of the unacceptability of murder. There was no point in teaching them what they already knew. Consequently, abstaining from blood could not denote shunning murder.

B) Gentiles did not accept adultery.<sup>481</sup> Therefore, abstaining from πορνεία must have meant these types of sexual behaviour which were not acceptable to Christians, but were acceptable in wider Gentile society.

C) Jerome ironically comments that the Gentiles' highest virtue was to not rob each other. Accordingly, he confirms that theft was condemned in the Gentile society. Thus, we can surmise that a lack of a theft prohibition among the Apostolic Council's rulings was a result of a lack of necessity for forbidding something which was already forbidden.

The common thread of all these statements consists of the interpretation of the prohibitions as actions unacceptable to Jews, but acceptable to the Gentiles. This observation contains a plausible answer to the question why among the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions there was, for instance, no proscription of robbery or giving false testimony. The Council simply did not see the need to teach the Gentiles to abstain from something they already abstained from.

In light of what was said above, abstaining from πορνεία in Acts 15:20.29 is best interpreted as shunning all kinds of sexual immorality that was abhorrent to the Jews, but acceptable in the Gentile society. As there were many sorts of sexual behaviour permitted by the pagans and rejected by the Jews, πορνεία in Acts 15:20.29 probably cannot be reduced to mean only one type. For instance, one proposal described by Fitzmyer interprets πορνεία from the Jerusalem Council's prohibitions as incest.<sup>482</sup> Another proposal is expressed in the *New Jerusalem Bible's* rendering of πορνεία in Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25. This rendering, "from illicit marriages",<sup>483</sup> interprets

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<sup>481</sup> For the distinction between Christian and Gentile conception of adultery, see footnote 453.

<sup>482</sup> J.A. Fitzmyer (ed.), *The Acts of the Apostles. A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AncB 31; New Haven – London 1998) 557-558.

<sup>483</sup> H. Wansbrough (ed.), *New Jerusalem Bible* (New York 1985), *BibleWorks*, v.8.

πορνεία as a term denoting unlawfully contracted matrimony according to the Jewish standards (e.g. marriage between a man and a woman with close degrees of consanguinity). These proposals, in their strictest forms, are not found among the ancient Christian writings analysed in this thesis. Nevertheless, if we understand them more broadly so that πορνεία means not exclusively incest or illicit marriage, but both incest, illicit marriage, prostitution and any other sexual behaviour unacceptable for Jews and acceptable for pagans, then the proposals in question are in line with a number of the ancient interpretations.

As to the other prohibitions, the substantial number of the early Christian authors understood them as the dietary stipulations which were, nevertheless, strictly connected to one or more Decalogian rulings. In other words, in the view of the ancient writers, these dietary rulings needed to be observed by Christians as ancillary commands helping them to shun real moral evil, like murder or idolatry. The latter one is particularly interesting since the necessity to teach new converts to abstain radically from worshipping idols can explain the existence of all four prohibitions: eating food offered to idols may have been an act of idolatry, eating blood or animals whose blood has not been poured out could have been seen as too closely connected with polytheistic sacrificial worship and πορνεία could have denoted sacral prostitution (alongside other types of sexual immorality<sup>484</sup> which were acceptable among the Gentiles in the Roman Empire). This interpretation corroborates, in general, the plausibility of the

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<sup>484</sup> These other types may have also been regarded as somehow connected to idolatry on the basis of Paul's words that the body of a Christian is a member of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor 6:15-20) so committing πορνεία would amount to committing pagan idolatric practice in the temple of God.



cultic interpretations of the prohibitions shared by some contemporary scholars.<sup>485</sup>

As to the other implications drawn from the findings of the thesis for contemporary scholarship on the text of Acts and especially on the Western text, the following need to be mentioned:

A) The thesis shows that Irenaeus, Tertullian and Augustine who quoted only the Western variant of Acts 15:29, were, nevertheless, aware of the existence of the prohibitions to consume blood or strangled animals which were (or at least had earlier been) observed by Christians. Especially in cases of Tertullian and Augustine, it is rather unlikely that they drew this dietary interpretation (only) from the Western version because they both knew about strangled animals which did not occur in this variant. As it is also unlikely that they knew the Eastern version of Acts 15:29,<sup>486</sup> it seems that the extrabiblical transmission is the source of their knowledge. This hypothetical extrabiblical transmission would be an argument in favour of the authenticity of the Eastern version of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 and the secondary nature of the Western version, contrary to the views of the minority of the contemporary scholars who still consider the Western variant if not original than at least primary in relation to the Eastern one.<sup>487</sup>

B) The majority of quotations / references of the Western version of Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25 analysed in this thesis come from the works written in Latin. The Greek quotations of these verses in the Western version are

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<sup>485</sup> Cf. e.g., C.H. Savelle, "A Reexamination of the Prohibitions in Acts 15", *Bibliotheca Sacra* 161 (2004) 464-465.

<sup>486</sup> See the points of Part II, Chapter 1 dedicated to Tertullian and Augustine.

<sup>487</sup> E.g., J. Rius-Camps and J. Read-Heimerdinger who state: "No claim is being made [in this work] that Codex Bezae transmits the original autograph of Luke; the contention is more simply that its text predates that of the Alexandrian tradition and is closer to the language and thought of the third evangelist": Id., *The Message of Acts in Codex Bezae. A Comparison with the Alexandrian Tradition. Volume I. Acts 1.1-5.42. Jerusalem* (JSNT.S 257; London – New York, NY 2004) 3.

found only in Irenaeus' *Adv haer*. Moreover, not only is the Latin language dominant among the quotations of the Western variant of these verses in 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>-century Christian writings, but it is also very prominent among the extant Western manuscripts of Acts: As a matter of a fact, all the these manuscripts were written in Latin and this even applies (although in part) to the principal witness of the Western text, Codex Bezae, which is bilingual: Latin and Greek. The scarcity of Greek manuscripts containing the Western version of Acts 15:20.29 and / or 21:25 matched with the prevalence of the Latin language among the Western-text manuscripts and quotations of these verses seems to be another argument in favour of the posteriority of the Western text in comparison to the Alexandrian version, at least with regard to Acts 15:20.29 and 21:25.

Given the wide range of literary material collected and presented in this thesis, more such open research questions can easily be found.

It is my hope that assembling these texts which in a number of cases are not easy to access and the endeavor at their systematic analysis on the basis of the developed taxonomy will facilitate a more incisive discussion of the salient features of the respective interpretations.

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